

# The Chicago South Side Urban Agriculture Initiative: Evaluation of a New Urban Agriculture Curriculum and Innovation Network at an Urban Predominately Black University

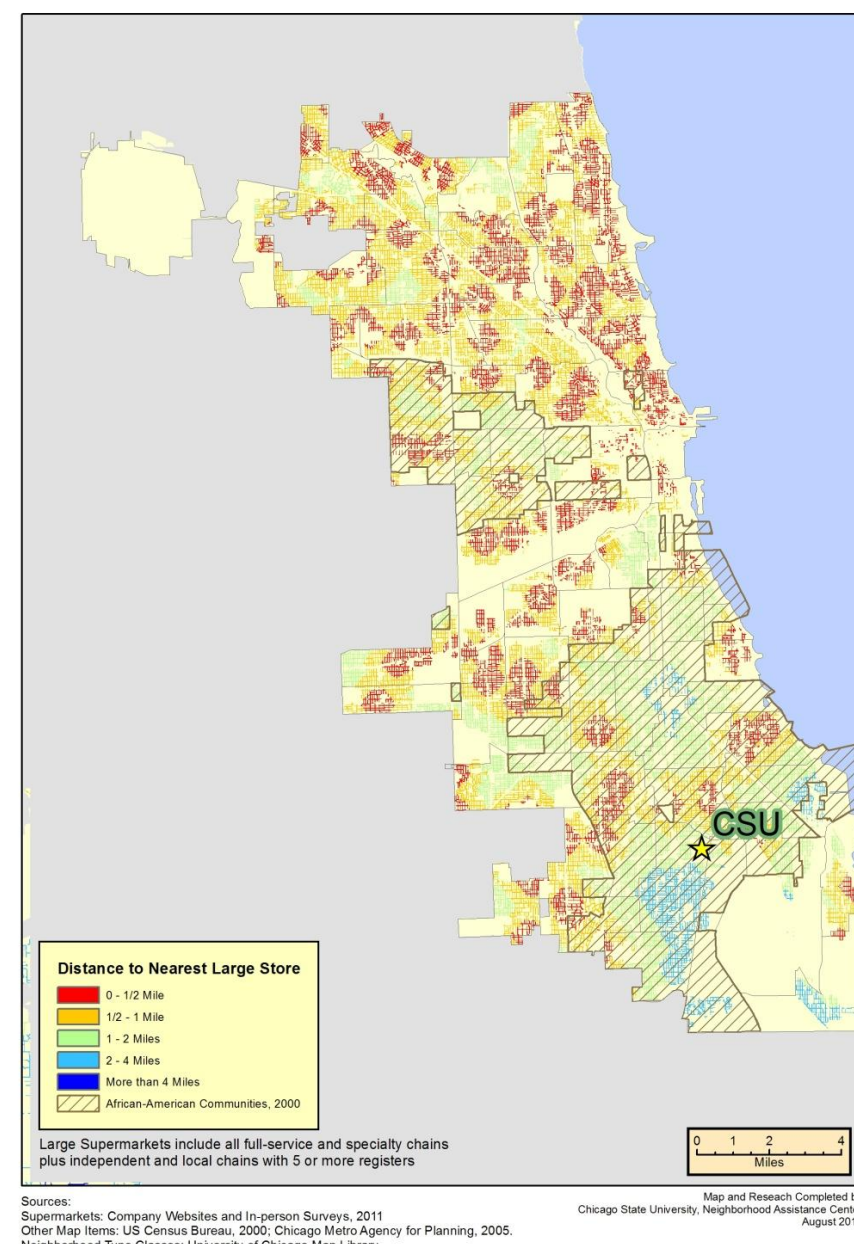
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## CHICAGO STATE UNIVERSITY

- Teaching-based university with approximately 5700 students
- Serves mainly Chicago's South Side and southern suburbs
- Approximately 74% African-American
- Typical student: female in late 20's, working full-time, with children

**From Chicago State's mission statement: CSU is committed to teaching, research, service and community development including social justice, leadership and entrepreneurship.**

Distance to Nearest Large Supermarket and Predominately African-American Communities Chicago, 2011 (Preliminary Map)



## THE CHICAGO SOUTH SIDE URBAN AGRICULTURE INITIATIVE

### Goal 1:

Develop interdisciplinary academic programs designed to increase the number of minority students educated to:

- envision, research and implement urban agriculture in urban settings to produce high quality food
- address societal issues regarding food access, justice and security
- pursue advanced academic degrees in agriculture and agriculture-related disciplines

### Goal 2:

Create a model urban agriculture network connecting the university to community gardens and for- and non-profit farms that can be implemented in a variety of urban settings.



Aquaponics Center Director Emmanuel Pratt speaks to a group of visiting students

## THE CURRICULUM

- Concentrations within the existing Biology and Geography programs
- Students will major in one program and minor in the opposite program
- 2 shared interdisciplinary classes
- (Food, Urban Agriculture and the Environment, Capstone)
- New Gen Ed classes (Food Justice, Urban Ecology)
- Focus on internships, service learning

## THE ROSELAND/PULLMAN URBAN AGRICULTURE NETWORK

- Began in April 2010
- Monthly meetings of 8-40 people, from 4-10 community gardens/urban agriculture sites



Urban Planner Brad Roback speaks to the network about Urban Agriculture zoning laws

- Centered in area near Chicago State, includes sites across the South Side
- Focused on networking, linking to resources
- Chances for policy feedback linking to Chicago Food Policy Advisory Council
- Seed grants offered to partner organizations through NIFA grant



Seed grant recipient Paula Roderick of SEEDS



Networking exercise for seed grantees

## CSU AQUAPONICS CENTER

- Opened in 2010 through city grant
- Goal: To be an innovation hub for aquaponics and urban agriculture on Chicago's South Side
- In former shoe warehouse
- Enjoys strong support of CSU president
- Focus has been on community engagement, lifelong learning



The Aquaponics Center

## EVALUATION: STRENGTHS

### Goal 1: The Curriculum

- Design is Solid
- Classes have involved large amounts of hands-on practice and community engagement
- GenEd courses have successfully run with about 50 students total

### Goal 2: Community Network

- Network has now met regularly for over four years
- Network members have learned both from resources shared at meetings and through partnerships between themselves.

*"While five hundred dollars is not a lot of money for a grant, we did increase our growing area; we used some of the money to get access to a tractor to ... till areas which led to more usable space."*  
*"I made connections with members and developed relationships with them outside the group."*  
*-Seed grant recipients*

## EVALUATION: CHALLENGES

### Goal 1: The Curriculum

- No majors as of Spring 2014
- Classes are not required for biology or geography
- Few faculty available with related specialties

### Goal 2: Community Network

- Seed grants were small
- University took long time to deliver funding, and required staff follow up
- Continuity between meetings can be a problem