



College Farm Strategic Plan – 2026-2031

The Dickinson College Farm mission is ***“to teach the science, culture, and innovative practices of food and energy production to ensure a more resilient and just future.”*** For almost two decades, Dickinson students, faculty, and community members have come to the Dickinson College Farm to learn, collaborate, and participate in work that seeks to inspire an appreciation for responsible land stewardship. As the College Farm program has evolved over the last 19 years, so have its efforts at creating a living laboratory capable of supporting place-based connections, collaborative initiatives, social events, and revenue generation.

Since 2020, the work of the College Farm has changed to meet the needs of our key stakeholder, the Dickinson College student. As we continue to adapt and anticipate the future, 2026 presents an ideal moment to take stock of the farm’s accomplishments and to map out the next five years. Over the fall semester of 2025, a group of farm staff and campus partners convened to critically examine existing programs, identify strengths and opportunities, and help lay the foundation for this strategic plan.

Our Goal is to cultivate inclusive and impactful educational experiences from which students can realize a future in food systems work through hands-on learning, research, coursework, internships, and engagement opportunities. Additionally, through the tangible work of growing food, the College Farm will help build and nourish community both on campus and in the region.

Our Opportunity is to demonstrate the benefits that a living laboratory can have on a liberal-arts education. We seek to share the outcomes of our persistent commitment to innovation, collaboration, and responsible resource management and to build our reputation as regional leader in sustainability. As a result, the Dickinson College Farm will contribute directly toward educating and empowering future generations of leaders whose actions reflect innovative problem-solving, social, and cultural competency, resilience, and a commitment to preserving our shared natural resources.

Opportunity: Maximize the value of the biodigester and other farm renewable energy resources.

Solution:

- Optimize system operations to increase energy export while maintaining sustainability of staffing and the financial bottom line of the program.
- Further integrate the farm’s renewable energy resources into student educational opportunities, faculty teaching, and research.
- Leverage the program’s existing reputation to elevate the college’s profile regionally and secure funding for additional project development.

Opportunity: Increase academic engagement and support.

Solution:

- Cultivate and formalize opportunities for greater faculty engagement at the College Farm through targeted curricular support, learning modules, “how to” guides.
- Survey faculty to better understand and address real and perceived barriers to engagement with the College Farm for course goals and objectives.
- Continue to provide academic contributions to the Food Studies Certificate, Environmental Studies, and other appropriate departments by teaching required courses and electives.
- Increase coursework collaboration by 4% each academic school year.
- Grow long-term research engagement with faculty, with particular emphasis on student-faculty research projects.

Opportunity: Optimize sales and production in ways that contribute meaningfully to the student experience and ensures robust resources for future generations.

Solution:

- Develop farming systems that increase field and staff productivity to yield greater volumes of nutrient dense crops.
- Leverage biological and ecological principles to steward the farm ecosystems using methods that enhance soil health, natural resources, and farm organisms.
- Intentionally curate the student experience as workers, volunteers, future apprentices, and leaders through empowerment, varied experiences, leadership opportunities, and connections within the broader agricultural community.
- Work to maximize the benefits of the livestock production program while increasing animal and pasture health as well as economic viability.

Opportunity: Grow and deepen campus-based outreach and programming.

Solution:

- Maintain core programs while developing new collaborations with campus departments, students, clubs, as well as community partners.
- Develop system for assessing the viability of new or inconsistent programming based on meeting student needs and interests.
- Continue to work across campus to cultivate partnerships and support for the Waste Warrior initiative to divert organic waste to the farm’s biodigester.
- Collaborate with campus partners to develop systems for future campus events to achieve zero waste.

Opportunity: Maximize innovative farm revenue generation.

Solution:

- Continually explore new revenue-generating business ventures and develop systems for assessing returns on investment.
 - New ventures for this strategic planning cycle include seasonal u-pick patches, an on-site farm store, and summer music events.
- Develop a sustainable mix of business ventures that increases products raised on the farm all the while maintaining strong customer satisfaction without overburdening farm staff.
- Ensure that the farm's Campus Supported Agriculture (CSA) program remains customer-focused and dynamic by design to meet the needs of its members.
- Maximize Farm Works to grow our customer base and build awareness of sustainable food options through innovative farm-to-table products and menu items.

Opportunity: Cultivate community connections and outreach opportunities.

Solution:

- Create accessible opportunities for the regional community to experience the College Farm through public tours.
- Develop viable community outreach initiatives that also generate revenue.
- Work with area partners addressing food insecurity to provide fresh produce donations whenever possible.
- Collaborate with area food pantries to explore new ways of minimizing food insecurity based on community needs relative to farm and campus resources.
- Engage schools and partner with regional sustainable agriculture groups as time and staff resources permit.

Opportunity: Cultivate and maintain a supportive and collaborative farm team that builds upon the strengths of staff members to achieve program and production goals.

Solution:

- Facilitate workplace structures that empower staff members through trainings, collaborative projects and initiatives that advance the understanding and appreciation of programs and services provided by the College Farm
- Ensure staff compensation is competitive with peer institutions, scope of work expected, program recognition, and reflects fluctuating housing, food, and living costs.
- Invest the necessary time and resources to build a cohesive team.

