

# Davidson College Students' Relationship to Cooking and Access to Resources: the Development of a College Cookbook

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## Introduction

With the advent of the Davidson College Farm's Wednesday Farm Stand, students now have the opportunity to purchase fresh produce on campus. Through speaking with students on Davidson's Campus, one will find that many students enjoy cooking while they are at home, or are interested in developing their culinary skills. These two realizations led us to develop two questions:

1. "Do Davidson College students lack the needed equipment to cook meals in on-campus living spaces?"
2. "What would be an effective and useful digital cookbook for students on Davidson Campus that would also encourage produce sales from the Davidson Campus Farm Stand?"

The purpose of our research is to determine if a lack of available cooking equipment and utensils prohibits Davidson Students from cooking their own meals. Additionally, we studied how a digital cookbook for students on Davidson Campus might encourage student cooking and produce sales from the Davidson Campus Farm. We hypothesize that many students at Davidson lack knowledge and resources to cook healthy meals on campus. We predict that a digital Davidson College Cookbook will encourage students to cook using produce from the farm, and will increase awareness about accessible cooking resources on campus.

## Background

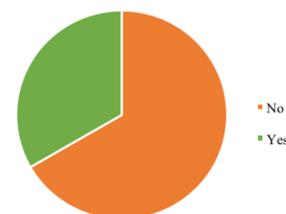
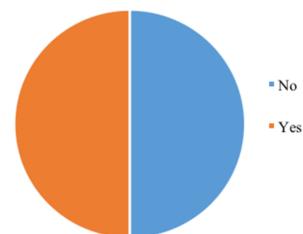
Freshmen, Sophomores, and Junior students are required to have a meal plan on campus, while Seniors are not. This is due to an institutional change implemented when the class of 2018 enrolled at Davidson. Students are able to choose from a variety of meal plans, ranging from 75 meals a semester, to 21 meals a week. Organizations that would fall under the category of "Greek life" on campus, are referred to as Patterson Court Council Organizations (PCC). At Davidson, 63% of women and 45% of men on campus are involved with a PCC Organization. Each PCC Organization has its own meal plan that members are either required to pay or have the option to pay. The Davidson College Farm offers fresh and naturally grown produce to the College community through the Dining Services operation, the on-campus Farm Stand, and a CSA program. The farm is a stand-alone, business-based unit of the college (Davidson.edu).

## Methods

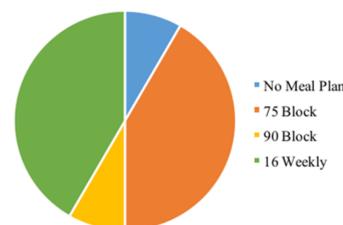
We selected twelve participants from a variety of backgrounds, using a purposively selected sample to satisfy key variables: class year, knowledge of the Davidson College Farm, interaction with the Farm, cooking habits on campus, PCC involvement, Sustainability Co-op resident, meal plan status, and student athlete status. After selecting students within these categories, we reached out to them through Davidson email. We scheduled interviews over email, and because of a limited time frame, we completed four interviews each. Our research would be stronger if we were able to conduct more qualitative interviews with a larger sample. The semi-structured qualitative interviews lasted between fifteen to thirty minutes, consisting of questions about participant's relationship to food on campus, cooking, the farm, and cooking resource availability. We coded the twelve interviews and three main themes emerged: resource availability, interest in cooking, and connection to farm.

## Distributions of Variables from Sample

Participants that Have Visited the Farm    Participants that Have Visited the Farm Stand



Distribution of Participant Meal Plan Type



**Top Left.** The chart above shows that half of our participants have been to the Farm

**Bottom Left.** This chart displays the participant distribution of meal plan type.

**Top Right.** The chart above shows that the majority of participants have not been to the Farm Stand.

## Theme One: Resource Availability

*"When I cooked in the Tomlinson kitchen I just found it really inconvenient...I think if I had known about the multicultural house kitchen [I would have used it]. I don't know if that was around last year... but that's an awesome resource that I think students should use." (Multicultural House refers to the*

## Theme Two: Interest in Cooking

*"...It is not that I don't want to, it is just I don't have the time to cook a meal and clean everything up when I could just go to commons and union... and go off to practice."*

*"I would love to cook more communally and eat communally. Just with different schedules and money...it [becomes a] very individual [activity]."*

*"I am not good at [cooking], and it takes too much effort."*

## Theme Three: Connection to the Farm

*"I know it's there and I know they provide stuff to Commons sometimes. I have eaten some of their spinach[...] I don't know that much about it. I'm guessing they just have vegetables and stuff?"*

*"I don't know where it is.... So that's a factor. I didn't know it was something you could just go to. I thought it was something that was more private. I didn't know it was like lake campus."*

Images to the left are courtesy of Lexi Wombwell.

## Results

After coding the twelve interviews in an excel spreadsheet, we divided our data into three primary categories: Resource Availability, Interest in Cooking, and Connection to the Farm.

### Resource Availability

Within the "Resource Availability" theme, we found that access to resources depended on grade level and housing type. For example, first-year students who live in Freshmen housing do not have kitchens in their dorms. They indicated in their interviews that little to no resources were available to them. Sophomores living in Chidsey Hall and E.H. Little Hall discussed how living in these buildings has increased their access to cooking resources, as both dormitories have kitchens for student use. Juniors living off campus had full access to kitchens, while juniors living in Tomlinson Hall felt they had less access to kitchens. There is a kitchen in Tomlinson, but residents find it inconvenient and dirty. The senior participants all live on campus in senior apartments, and indicated that they had full access to cooking resources.

### Interest in Cooking

From the "Interest in Cooking" theme, we identified that most interviewees were interested in cooking. Two participants were not, and stated that they did not want to cook because they preferred the ease of not cooking. We found mandatory meal plan, kitchen access, time and expense as four main limitations identified within the "Limitations to Cooking/ the Cookbook" theme.

### Connection to the Farm

Finally, our "Connection to the Farm" data was varied. Some students had heard about the Farm through word of mouth, and these students often had not visited the farm or purchased from the Farm Stand. Conversely, the majority of students (excluding one) who have visited the Farm make frequent purchases from the market.

## Key Findings

Our results answer our two initial research questions: "Do Davidson College students lack the needed equipment to cook meals in on-campus living spaces?", and "What would be an effective and useful digital cookbook for students on Davidson Campus that would also encourage produce sales from the Davidson Campus Farm?"

- We found that access to a kitchen is a major factor that either allows or prohibits students from cooking on Davidson's campus. Our research shows that when students have kitchens, they cook.
- Students identified time, cost, and convenience as key decision making factors for cooking.
- The Multicultural House Kitchen can be a good resource for students that are interested in cooking.
- Students that have visited the Farm don't always purchase from the Farm Market Stand.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Our qualitative research shows that Davidson students are interested in cooking on campus, but they don't always have the time, resources, or equipment to do so. In consultation with our results and other sources, we have created an online cookbook for students to increase awareness about resources that are available on campus (the Multicultural House Kitchen, dorm kitchens, and the Davidson Farm's produce), and to provide basic cooking instruction.

In addition to this cookbook, we recommend that further steps should be taken to increase students' ability to cook on campus. The College could facilitate more opportunities for students to cook together like in the Sustainability Co-Op. We also recommend that the school provide cooking utensils that students can rent, and the development of some sort of ingredient share system. These two recommendations would allow for resources to act as investments that address students desire to cook.

Because of our small, qualitative research sample, future research should continue to investigate cooking on Davidson's Campus. A survey could be conducted to gather data from a larger, more representative population of Davidson students. Also, research could be done to test the efficacy of our Campus Cookbook and evaluate if it encourages students to cook more on campus with produce from the Davidson College Farm.

