



**Humane
World for
Animals™**

Formerly called the Humane
Society of the United States and
Humane Society International

College and university protein sustainability scorecard

January 2025



Welcome to our college and university protein sustainability scorecard

Our food system has a significant impact on the environment, with greenhouse gas emissions produced by global food production accounting for 20% to 37% of all human-made GHGs. Animal products, such as meat and dairy, have a much larger environmental footprint compared to plant-based foods. They require markedly more resources, including land, water and feed, and they cause more water, soil and air pollution during production.

While many environmental issues have reached a global scale, they are perpetuated at an individual level. When we look at the big picture, the impact of even a single meal is clear. College and university dining operations are responsible for serving millions of meals each year and can play a large role in mitigating harmful effects by adding more plant-based options to their menus, thereby reducing the volume of animal products purchased and sold.

Beyond sustainability, there's also a need to focus on plant-based foods to improve consumer health and to reduce the suffering of animals used for food. Colleges and universities that commit to a tangible increase in plant-based meals and/or reducing animal protein purchases have positioned themselves to be socially responsible leaders in the industry.





Introduction

About the survey

Our Food Service Innovation team developed this protein sustainability scorecard to learn which of the nation's largest self-operated colleges and universities are committed to protecting the environment. Every institution listed on this scorecard received a survey from us.

Our survey focused on three main topics to demonstrate each school's efforts in creating a more sustainable dining operation on its campus: transparency, goals and a plan of action. In addition to self-reporting, we have asked the universities to share menus and purchasing data to verify what was reported to receive the full point value for several questions within the survey. If a school did not complete the survey, we let it know that our team would complete the survey on its behalf using publicly available information.

After the initial submission, our team offered private feedback with customized recommendations to help increase overall scores, as it was our goal to help every college and university earn as many points as possible. To better understand the scoring process and reporting criteria, please reference the survey [here](#).

Resources: How to reach significant impact

Our Food Service Innovation team at Humane World for Animals offers many resources to college and university dining operations at no charge. It is easier than ever to maximize sustainability through plant-based innovation by collaborating with our team of professional chefs, registered dietitians and industry experts. They provide support with marketing content, recipe ideation and development, climate impact reporting and culinary education. A summary of these resources can be found [here](#).

Touting one's sustainability work or GHG reduction strategy has become routine in the food service industry, especially among colleges and universities, to appeal to their demographics. Consumers deserve to know which college and university dining programs are following through on their stated goals and which, at least at this point, are not. For those that the scorecard shows as shining examples of leadership, we thank you.



Scorecard ranking

Rank	College and university name	Score	Grade
1	University of Colorado Boulder	360	A+
2	University of North Texas	340	A+
3	The University of Texas at Austin	325	A+
4	University of Michigan–Ann Arbor	315	A+
5	University of Arizona	305	A
6	Washington State University	295	A
7	University of California, Berkeley	290	A
8	Rutgers University	285	A
9	Oregon State University	275	A
9	The University of Washington	275	A
10	University of California, Los Angeles	270	A
11	The Ohio State University	260	B+
12	University of Georgia	230	B+

Rank	College and university name	Score	Grade
13	University of California, San Diego	205	B
14	University of Maryland, College Park	195	B
15	University of California, Davis	190	B
15	University of Southern California	190	B
16	University of Wisconsin–Madison	185	B
17	Indiana University Bloomington	180	B
18	North Carolina State University	175	B
19	University of Nebraska–Lincoln	160	C+
20	Colorado State University	125	C+
21	Georgia State University	120	C
22	University at Buffalo	115	C
23	Brigham Young University	110	C
24	The University of Oklahoma	85	C

Rank	College and university name	Score	Grade
25	The Pennsylvania State University	80	C
25	University of Connecticut	80	C
25	Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University	80	C
26	The University of Oregon	65	D+
27	Michigan State University	60	D+
27	University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign	60	D+
28	San Diego State University	50	D+
29	Oklahoma State University	40	D+
30	Iowa State University of Science and Technology	20	D
30	Purdue University	20	D
31	Kennesaw State University	0	F
31	Texas Tech University	0	F
31	Utah Valley University	0	F

A top-down photograph of a rustic meal. In the center is a dark brown ceramic bowl filled with a creamy cauliflower cheese dish. The cauliflower is in small, irregular florets, coated in a thick, pale yellow sauce. A generous layer of golden-brown, toasted breadcrumbs is sprinkled over the top, with a fine dusting of red paprika. A single, fresh green parsley leaf is placed on the right side of the bowl as a garnish. To the left of the bowl, several whole, bright orange carrots with their green tops still attached are arranged diagonally. The entire scene is set on a light-colored, natural wood surface. In the bottom right corner, there are small piles of red paprika and white breadcrumbs, suggesting the ingredients used in the dish.

Detailed analysis of institutions

University of Colorado Boulder

Rank

#1

Score

360

Grade

A+

Average plant-based meals

50% or more

Universitywide goals and commitments

75% of options offered will be plant-based by 2025.

University of Colorado Boulder is a leader in sustainable dining. The university demonstrates unparalleled creativity and commitment with its menu options, environmental initiatives, professional development and student marketing.

CU Boulder's dining services offers plant-based meal options at every station, where a multitude of plant-based proteins are incorporated. The university has plant-based options featured even during nontraditional mealtimes and stations, such as breakfast and dessert, as well as in sides or add-ons, including milks, condiments and other options at buffets and grill stations. Plant-based defaults are also present in stews, curries and many build-your-own stations.

CU Boulder's dining operation is a member of the Menus of Change University Research Collaborative, wherein it supports other universities in making similar plant-forward menu changes. With this network, the university is also able to collaborate on professional development opportunities and track the environmental impacts of its dining operations.

All sous chefs and executive chefs complete comprehensive training with the campus's registered dietitian nutritionist, which includes education on plant-based cuisine, and the staff has friendly cooking competitions to increase skills and innovation with plant-based dishes. CU Boulder's dining team regularly collaborates with the university's marketing department, the environmental center and on-campus groups to engage and educate students on plant-based eating and the many options available.

As a true model of sustainable dining, University of Colorado Boulder has been invited to join the 2025 Forward Food Advisory Council to further promote its successful efforts as well as to mentor higher education dining programs across the country in serving more sustainable menus.

Rank

#1

Score

360

Grade

A+

Average plant-based meals

50% or more

Universitywide goals and commitments

75% of options offered will be plant-based by 2025.

University of Colorado Boulder verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

- Tracking its plant-based meal percentage
- Actively tracking greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with meals or proteins served
- A measurable, time-bound target to increase plant-based meals served
- A glidepath to support its plant-based target
- Identified plant-based initiatives in operational standards
- Identified reducing the portion size of animal proteins served in operational standards
- Offering professional development and training to staff related to plant-based education, marketing, recipe development and culinary skills
- Implementing new plant-based recipes or products to utilize annually
- Marketing campaigns focused on plant-based initiatives
- Utilizing plant-based proteins as the default with the option to add meat and dairy within one of its dining halls or dining stations
- Actively working with an outside organization (such as Humane World for Animals or another organization) to prioritize and support its plant-based initiatives
- Replaced or is actively working to replace eggs and dairy in standard recipes with plant-based ingredients or products

Recommendations:

CU Boulder has invested in sustainable dining over the long term in significant and impactful ways. The university has much to offer other institutions that are looking to improve their sustainable plant-based dining options. We encourage its campus dining services to continue to collaborate with other organizations to help educate other universities around the country on best practices for successfully implementing delicious, nutritious plant-based options onto menus.

University of North Texas

Rank

#2

Score

340

Grade

A+

Average plant-based meals

41%-45%

Universitywide goals and commitments

50% of meals offered will be plant-based by 2025.

University of North Texas has been a pioneer in plant-based dining since the founding of its groundbreaking Mean Greens Café, the first fully plant-based dining hall on a U.S. college campus. UNT's dining team collaborates closely with the Menus of Change University Research Collaborative, wherein it supports other universities in making similar plant-forward menu changes, to align sustainability goals, track greenhouse gas emissions and participate in initiatives that advance both environmental and health outcomes in campus dining.

In addition to the Mean Greens Café, UNT has integrated plant-based options across every dining hall, including the newest and largest food-hall style concept, Eagle Landing. UNT also maintains an allergen-free dining hall, Kitchen West, which offers many whole foods, plant-based options without the top nine allergens. An on-site commissary bakes all the breads, pastries and desserts served on campus, many of which are made without eggs or dairy.

UNT's marketing department promotes plant-based options through social media, digital screens and campuswide events, celebrating milestones such as the Mean Greens Café's 10-year anniversary in 2021. The university also supports professional development sessions and conferences for culinary staff, often in collaboration with MCURC partners, to support plant-forward recipe innovation and training.

Rank

#2

Score

340

Grade

A+

Average plant-based meals

41%-45%

Universitywide goals and commitments

50% of meals offered will be plant-based by 2025.

University of North Texas verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

- Tracking its plant-based meal percentage
- Actively tracking greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with meals or proteins served
- A measurable, time-bound target to increase plant-based meals served
- A glidepath to support its plant-based target
- Identified plant-based initiatives in operational standards
- Identified reducing the portion size of animal proteins served in operational standards
- Offering professional development and training to staff related to plant-based education, marketing, recipe development and culinary skills
- Implementing new plant-based recipes or products to utilize annually
- Marketing campaigns focused on plant-based initiatives
- Actively working with an outside organization (such as Humane World for Animals or another organization) to prioritize and support its plant-based initiatives
- Replaced or is actively working to replace eggs and dairy in standard recipes with plant-based ingredients or products

Recommendations:

UNT continues to make impressive strides in plant-based dining. We recommend further development of data collection strategies to measure the sales (take rates) of plant-based options and exploring the use of plant-based proteins as a default across dining operations. These initiatives would provide valuable case studies for the MCURC and would be further supported by UNT’s recent collaboration with our Food Service Innovation team.

The University of Texas at Austin

Rank

#3

Score

325

Grade

A+

Average plant-based meals

46%-50%

Universitywide goals and commitments

50% of meals offered will be plant-based by 2024.

The University of Texas at Austin has a longstanding and thorough commitment to sustainability throughout campus, particularly in its dining services. Earlier this year, it set a precedent by becoming the first institution in the country to fulfill the Forward Food pledge with Humane World for Animals. In accomplishing this impressive goal, UT Austin currently offers a 50% plant-based menu, with a commitment to maintain this level as a minimum standard through 2027 as a part of its continued collaboration with our Food Service Innovation team.

UT Austin also collaborates with Cool Food, AASHE and Menus of Change to integrate plant-based options, track greenhouse gas emissions, report on sustainability initiatives and offer staff culinary training in plant-based recipe development and marketing. Signature offerings include a “Plant Powered” line at every major dining hall, with whole food and plant-based meat alternative options available at other stations for every meal.

The university is also piloting blended burgers (which are a mix of animal proteins and plant proteins such as mushrooms) and replacing many traditional egg and dairy ingredients with plant-based alternatives across various recipes, making half of its desserts and soups plant-based.

UT Austin uses creative marketing strategies to highlight its plant-based offerings, hosting events such as the Veggie Revolution Dinner and cultural station takeovers and providing informational displays throughout dining locations. Student focus groups for special diets, sustainability clubs and animal welfare groups are often solicited for their feedback on new plant-based offerings. Initiatives such as the student-led farmer’s market, which supplies fresh produce to campus dining services, also help to foster community engagement around sustainable eating.

As a true model of sustainable dining, The University of Texas at Austin has been invited to join the 2025 Forward Food Advisory Council to further promote its successful efforts as well as to mentor higher education dining programs across the country in serving more sustainable menus.

Rank

#3

Score

325

Grade

A+

Average plant-based meals

46%-50%

Universitywide goals and commitments

50% of meals offered will be plant-based by 2024.

The University of Texas at Austin verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

- Tracking its plant-based meal percentage
- Actively tracking greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with meals or proteins served
- A measurable, time-bound target to increase plant-based meals served
- A glidepath to support its plant-based target
- Identified plant-based initiatives in operational standards
- Identified reducing the portion size of animal proteins served in operational standards
- Offering professional development and training to staff related to plant-based education, marketing, recipe development and culinary skills
- Implementing new plant-based recipes or products to utilize annually
- Marketing campaigns focused on plant-based initiatives
- Actively working with an outside organization (such as Humane World for Animals or another organization) to prioritize and support its plant-based initiatives
- Replaced or is actively working to replace eggs and dairy in standard recipes with plant-based ingredients or products

Recommendations:

UT Austin has made incredible strides in plant-based dining and sustainability. We recommend developing data collection strategies for take rates on plant-based options and exploring plant-based proteins as a default throughout its dining operation. We encourage its campus dining services to continue to collaborate with external organizations to help educate other universities around the country on best practices for successfully implementing delicious, nutritious plant-based options onto menus.

University of Michigan–Ann Arbor

Rank

#4

Score

315

Grade

A+

Average plant-based meals

50% or more

Universitywide goals and commitments

55% of meals offered will be plant-based by 2025.

University of Michigan–Ann Arbor is a leader among large universities for its sustainable dining. UM–Ann Arbor’s dining operation has set a goal to serve 55% plant-based meals by 2025, and it is making substantial progress toward its goal. Carbon emissions from food purchased and served are tracked.

UM–Ann Arbor has a policy to provide plant-based options at each meal and is actively increasing the availability of plant-based milk across dining operations. All chefs are encouraged to develop new plant-based recipes for implementation, and they work closely with the registered dietitians to ensure health and wellness principles are applied to each recipe. Annual trainings to improve plant-based education for culinary staff are also in place.

In the past two years, UM–Ann Arbor’s dining program has hosted our Food Service Innovation team on campus several times for culinary trainings on protein foundations for staff and plant-based cooking demonstrations for students at the Maize and Blue Cupboard food pantry.

UM–Ann Arbor is working with Humane World for Animals and other campus partners to analyze the environmental footprint of its menus. The university also works closely with its student population to educate them on the environmental impact of their food choices and has detailed, transparent information available for students on its website.

Rank

#4

Score

315

Grade

A+

Average plant-based meals

50% or more

Universitywide goals and commitments

55% of meals offered will be plant-based by 2025.

University of Michigan–Ann Arbor verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

- Tracking its plant-based meal percentage
- Actively tracking greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with meals or proteins served
- A measurable, time-bound target to increase plant-based meals served
- A glidepath to support its plant-based target
- Identified plant-based initiatives in operational standards
- Offering professional development and training to staff related to plant-based education, marketing, recipe development and culinary skills
- Implementing new plant-based recipes or products to utilize annually
- Marketing campaigns focused on plant-based initiatives
- Utilizing plant-based proteins as the default with the option to add meat and dairy within one of its dining halls or dining stations
- Actively working with an outside organization (such as Humane World for Animals or another organization) to prioritize and support its plant-based initiatives
- Replaced or is actively working to replace eggs and dairy in standard recipes with plant-based ingredients or products

Recommendations:

UM–Ann Arbor is taking meaningful, measurable and bold strides to improve sustainability through its menu offerings. We recommend UM–Ann Arbor’s dining operation continue to increase its variety of plant-based meals and work to include more plant-based defaults. We also recommend it seek opportunities to help educate other institutions on successfully implementing sustainable, plant-based options onto menus.

University of Arizona

Rank

#5

Score

305

Grade

A

Average plant-based meals

36%-40%

Universitywide goals and commitments

40% of meals offered will be plant-based by 2025.

University of Arizona has set an outstanding example of a sustainable dining operation through its many plant-based endeavors. The university leads the way with its mostly plant-based all-you-care-to-eat dining hall, Radicchio, which features a hot line, carving station, salad bar and dessert station (all gluten- and nut-free!).

The U of A is close to meeting its plant-based menu goal of serving 40% plant-based meals by 2025 and reports impressive take rates.

The university has participated in several award-winning plant-based initiatives, including offering innovative plant-based options at its market location, such as freshly ground nut butters and a featured plant-based milk of the month.

The university's dining operation regularly uses marketing campaigns to promote its plant-based options, including sampling events, "\$5 Fridays" at its plant-forward dining hall, social media contests, student cooking classes and a dining guide that identifies plant-based options on campus.

The U of A has participated in staff trainings hosted by our team in the past and collaborates with Partnership for a Healthier America's Healthier Campus Initiative, which prioritizes plant-based options in its guidelines. The U of A offers student and staff education through its plant-based culinary education and training program, plantEd.

In addition to its mostly plant-based dining hall, the U of A also utilizes the "plant-based nudge" approach at its creation stations with bowl and burrito concepts, and the university is working to replace eggs and dairy in many standard recipes. The university also serves blended burgers and meatballs (which are a mix of animal proteins and plant proteins such as mushrooms) and employs additional strategies to decrease its animal protein portion sizes.

As a true model of sustainable dining, University of Arizona has been invited to join the 2025 Forward Food Advisory Council to further promote its successful efforts as well as to mentor higher education dining programs across the country in serving more sustainable menus.

Rank

#5

Score

305

Grade

A

Average plant-based meals

36%-40%

Universitywide goals and commitments

40% of meals offered will be plant-based by 2025.

University of Arizona verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

- Tracking its plant-based meal percentage
- Tracking sales (take rates) of plant-based meals
- A measurable, time-bound target to increase plant-based meals served
- A glidepath to support its plant-based target
- Identified plant-based initiatives in operational standards
- Identified reducing the portion size of animal proteins served in operational standards
- Offering professional development and training to staff related to plant-based education, marketing, recipe development and culinary skills
- Implementing new plant-based recipes or products to utilize annually
- Marketing campaigns focused on plant-based initiatives
- Replaced or is actively working to replace eggs and dairy in standard recipes with plant-based ingredients or products
- Utilizing plant-based proteins as the default with the option to add meat and dairy within one of its dining halls or dining stations
- Actively working with an outside organization (such as Humane World for Animals or another organization)to prioritize and support its plant-based initiatives
- Replaced or is actively working to replace eggs and dairy in standard recipes with plant-based ingredients or products

Recommendations:

We have high praise for the U of A and its efforts in university sustainable dining. We recommend that the university increase its plant-based menu goal to serve at least 50% plant-based meals by 2027 and begin tracking its greenhouse gas emissions associated with meals (or proteins) served to measure its food-related environmental impact. We are very impressed by the U of A's mostly plant-based dining hall and encourage the location to make a full transition.

Washington State University

Washington State University was notably one of the first universities to set a plant-based goal with us, and the first university within this report to sign the Forward Food Pledge.

Since signing the pledge in 2021, WSU is on track to hit its goal of 40% plant-based meals by 2025, with over one-third of its current menus being plant-based. The university and our team have a long history of collaboration, including completing a virtual culinary training where we trained 40 staff members on plant-based recipes. The dining program has also participated in two virtual product trainings and our Forward Food Leadership Summit. Additionally, WSU has worked with our team at Humane World for Animals and professional services firm WSP to conduct an assessment of greenhouse gas emissions from food purchases.

The dining operation offers staff training through biannual culinary bootcamps that incorporate plant-based concepts, as well as “Moments with Martha” to help students learn healthy eating habits directly from its registered dietitian. The dining operation has a bowl concept that utilizes a plant-based default with a surcharge to add meat and dairy and regularly uses both whole foods items and plant-based products to replace eggs and dairy in some of its bakery and dressing options.

WSU employs various marketing strategies, such as featuring plant-based proteins first in its service lines and promoting the health and environmental benefits of plant-based food at campus events and through posters and other signage.

Rank

#6

Score

295

Grade

A

Average plant-based meals

36%-40%

Universitywide goals and commitments

40% of meals offered will be plant-based by 2025.

Rank

#6

Score

295

Grade

A

Average plant-based meals

36%-40%

Universitywide goals and commitments

40% of meals offered will be plant-based by 2025.

Washington State University verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

- Tracking its plant-based meal percentage
- Tracking sales (take rates) of plant-based meals
- Actively tracking greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with meals or proteins served
- A measurable, time-bound target to increase plant-based meals served
- A glidepath to support its plant-based target
- Identified plant-based initiatives in operational standards
- Offering professional development and training to staff related to plant-based education, marketing, recipe development and culinary skills
- Implementing new plant-based recipes or products to utilize annually
- Marketing campaigns focused on plant-based initiatives
- Utilizing plant-based proteins as the default with the option to add meat and dairy within one of its dining halls or dining stations
- Actively working with an outside organization (such as Humane World for Animals or another organization) to prioritize and support its plant-based initiatives
- Replaced or is actively working to replace eggs and dairy in standard recipes with plant-based ingredients or products

Recommendations:

We applaud WSU for being a leader in sustainable campus dining. We recommend that WSU offer more fully plant-based trainings to staff, focusing on marketing and student engagement to increase its take rates. We would also like to see WSU further its commitment to sustainability by increasing its plant-based menu goal to 50% by 2027 and implementing an operational standard to reduce the portion size of animal proteins served.

University of California, Berkeley

Rank

#7

Score

290

Grade

A

Average plant-based meals

31%-35%

Universitywide goals and commitments

50% of meals offered will be plant-based by 2027.

As the first school in the University of California system to set a plant-based menu goal, the University of California, Berkeley has solidified its position as a leader in this space, prioritizing environmental sustainability and student health alongside its academic prowess.

With an impressive baseline of almost one-third of all meals offered already being plant-based, UC Berkeley is committed to increasing this percentage in collaboration with our Food Service Innovation team through various recipe contests, student engagement strategies and plant-based menu expansions. The Alternative Meats (Alt: Meat) X-Lab at UC Berkeley also helps entrepreneurs and researchers investigate the next generation of foods, such as plant-based meats, dairy substitutes and alternative sources of fat and protein.

In addition to its goal to offer 50% plant-based meals on its menus, UC Berkeley has a goal through the UC Office of the President to procure 25% sustainable food and beverage purchases by 2030. Its dining team works closely with the campus sustainability department to track the global impacts of its meals, as they serve tens of thousands of students, faculty and community members each year. It implemented a stoplight logo system to inform students of the carbon impacts of their meal choices, with items marked in red being a high-impact food, compared to items marked in green being a low-impact food. The university also prioritizes purchasing produce and other ingredients from local organic farms.

UC Berkeley hosts a Plant-Forward Recipe Challenge twice a year, in which the chefs at its four largest dining commons compete to create the most popular plant-based recipe for students.

After passing out hundreds of surveys, the winner's recipe is crowned and permanently added to the university's menu cycles for students to enjoy throughout the rest of the year. The university also participates in the Menus of Change University Research Collaborative, wherein it supports other universities in making similar plant-forward menu changes.

Rank

#7

Score

290

Grade

A

Average plant-based meals

31%-35%

Universitywide goals and commitments

50% of meals offered will be plant-based by 2027.

University of California, Berkeley verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

- Tracking its plant-based meal percentage
- Actively tracking greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with meals or proteins served
- A measurable, time-bound target to increase plant-based meals served
- A glidepath to support its plant-based target
- Identified plant-based initiatives in operational standards
- Identified reducing the portion size of animal proteins served in operational standards
- Offering professional development and training to staff related to plant-based education, marketing, recipe development and culinary skills
- Implementing new plant-based recipes or products to utilize annually
- Marketing campaigns focused on plant-based initiatives
- Utilizing plant-based proteins as the default with the option to add meat and dairy within one of its dining halls or dining stations
- Actively working with an outside organization (such as Humane World for Animals or another organization) to prioritize and support its plant-based initiatives

Recommendations:

UC Berkeley is a leader among its peers in university sustainable dining. We recommend its operation begin tracking the take rates of its plant-based offerings to better understand which options are being well-received by students and to measure its overall environmental impact. We also recommend that UC Berkeley begin working to replace eggs and dairy in standard recipes with plant-based ingredients or products.

Rutgers University

Rank

#8

Score

285

Grade

A

Average plant-based meals

31%-35%

Universitywide goals and commitments

50% of meals offered will be plant-based or low-carbon by 2024.

Rutgers University has a long history of exceptional leadership when it comes to successfully promoting and serving sustainable meals for its students. Our Food Service Innovation team has collaborated with Rutgers for years to promote sustainable dining, including co-hosting a high-profile Forward Food Leadership Symposium for 200 attendees, as well as several culinary trainings for its teams with our chefs.

Rutgers reported an impressive sustainability target to reach 50% plant-based or low-carbon meals by 2024 and already features a 30%-35% plant-based menu, impacting over 6,200 meals per day (note: “low-carbon meals” doesn’t necessarily indicate plant-based meals and can include a lower-GHG-emitting animal protein, such as chicken versus beef). As part of its sustainable menu initiatives, Rutgers has added carbon footprint icons to its online menus. The icons act as an educational tool to help students make more sustainable food choices and serve as a metric for tracking menu sustainability over time.

Rutgers follows the principles of healthy, sustainable food through the Menus of Change University Research Collaborative, wherein it supports other universities in making similar, plant-forward menu changes. It strategically employs choice architecture to nudge students toward sustainable options and offers one plant-based meal for every animal-based meal option.

In 2023, Rutgers completed a case study which explored the use of defaults in two campus cafes, one using a default plant-based protein and one without a default plant-based protein. The results showed that not only did the plant-based default increase sales of plant-based proteins, but both the labor and food costs decreased. The study demonstrates the many benefits of offering more plant-based meals and serves as an example for other universities to implement a similar, plant-forward comparison strategy.

As a true model of sustainable dining, Rutgers University has been invited to join the 2025 Forward Food Advisory Council to further promote its successful efforts as well as to mentor higher education dining programs across the country in serving more sustainable menus.

Rank

#8

Score

285

Grade

A

Average plant-based meals

31%-35%

Universitywide goals and commitments

50% of meals offered will be plant-based or low-carbon by 2024.

Rutgers University verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

- Tracking its plant-based meal percentage
- Actively tracking greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with meals or proteins served
- A measurable, time-bound target to increase plant-based meals served
- Identified plant-based initiatives in operational standards.
- Offering professional development and training to staff related to plant-based education, marketing, recipe development and culinary skills
- Implementing new plant-based recipes or products to utilize annually
- Marketing campaigns focused on plant-based initiatives
- Actively working with an outside organization (such as Humane World for Animals or another organization) to prioritize and support its plant-based initiatives
- Replaced or is actively working to replace eggs and dairy in standard recipes with plant-based ingredients or products

Recommendations:

Rutgers is a clear leader in sustainable dining in higher education. Alongside its goal of 50% plant-based or low-carbon meals by 2024, we encourage its continued emphasis of plant-based proteins over animal-based proteins and its team to begin tracking the sales (take rates) of plant-based meals. We also recommend it identify reducing the portion size of animal proteins served in operational standards in addition to its existing language on increasing plant-based options.

Oregon State University

Rank

#9

Score

275

Grade

A

Average plant-based meals

26%-30%

Universitywide goals and commitments

50% of meals offered will be plant-based by 2027.

Oregon State University has demonstrated a strong commitment to sustainable dining and increasing its plant-based menu options. The university began working with our Food Service Innovation team in early 2023 toward its menu goals, with a focus on health, environmental sustainability and inclusivity. OSU is also working with Humane World for Animals and professional services firm WSP to conduct an assessment of greenhouse gas emissions from food purchases.

Last August, we hosted an in-person culinary training for over 30 staff members with an emphasis on whole foods that reflect diverse cuisines from around the globe.

In addition to working with Humane World for Animals, OSU is a member of the Menus of Change University Research Collaborative, wherein it supports other universities in making similar plant-forward menu changes. The institution has also provided plant-based training to its staff both internally and through the USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council.

The university's dining leadership team has implemented strategies to embrace concepts such as "move meat off the center of the plate" and plant-based nudges at several build-your-own stations, with plans to expand these initiatives over time.

OSU prioritizes working with local vendors and suppliers, such as Oregon Seaweed, and has a campus garden that provides organic, seasonal fruits and vegetables to its dining centers.

The dining nutrition team provides campus outreach education that includes themes around plant-based food, hosts "Taste of Campus" events where new plant-based recipes are featured, and is planning a Veganuary 2025 menu pilot.

Rank

#9

Score

275

Grade

A

Average plant-based meals

26%-30%

Universitywide goals and commitments

50% of meals offered will be plant-based by 2027.

Oregon State University verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

- Tracking its plant-based meal percentage
- Actively tracking greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with meals or proteins served
- A measurable, time-bound target to increase plant-based meals served
- A glidepath to support its plant-based target
- Identified plant-based initiatives in operational standards
- Identified reducing the portion size of animal proteins served in operational standards
- Offering professional development and training to staff related to plant-based education, marketing, recipe development and culinary skills
- Implementing new plant-based recipes or products to utilize annually
- Marketing campaigns focused on plant-based initiatives
- Utilizing plant-based proteins as the default with the option to add meat and dairy within one of its dining halls or dining stations
- Actively working with an outside organization (such as Humane World for Animals or another organization) to prioritize and support its plant-based initiatives
- Replaced or is actively working to replace eggs and dairy in standard recipes with plant-based ingredients or products

Recommendations:

OSU has made notable strides toward a more sustainable dining operation, and we applaud its meaningful and measurable actions in recent years. We look forward to helping OSU increase its current plant-based marketing initiatives, which will improve student engagement. Additionally, expanding its plant-based default approach would increase take rates, which we encourage tracking. We would like to see the university formally define its plant-based initiatives and animal protein portion size reduction standards by including this language in its operational standards.

The University of Washington

Rank

#9

Score

275

Grade

A

Average plant-based meals

36%-40%

Universitywide goals and commitments

48% of meals offered will be plant-based by 2025.

The University of Washington has demonstrated a strong commitment to sustainability in all aspects of campus life, including its dining operation. The university is currently offering over one-third plant-based meals with a public goal to reach 48% plant-based meals in the next year, while increasing student education around the broader impacts of our food choices.

The dining team also collaborates with the university's sustainability office to set complementary goals and track its food-related greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, the UW has made an intentional shift to purchasing more local, whole food, plant-based ingredients such as beans, legumes, nuts and seeds. The dining operation also tracks its plant-based take rates, providing important insights for long-term success.

In addition to being a member of the Menus of Change University Research Collaborative, wherein it supports other universities in making similar plant-forward menu changes, the university offers training to its culinary staff around plant-based food. The UW uses various marketing campaigns to promote its plant-based offerings, including its Balanced Plate initiative, which provides educational materials and information on menu boards, chef-led cooking demos and blind taste-testings of plant-based meat alternatives. The dining operation is actively replacing eggs and dairy in standard recipes with mung bean egg substitutes and plant-based mayonnaise, milks and cheeses.

As a true model of sustainable dining, the University of Washington has been invited to join the 2025 Forward Food Advisory Council to further promote its successful efforts as well as to mentor higher education dining programs across the country in serving more sustainable menus.

Rank

#9

Score

275

Grade

A

Average plant-based meals

36%-40%

Universitywide goals and commitments

48% of meals offered will be plant-based by 2025.

The University of Washington verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

- Tracking its plant-based meal percentage
- Tracking sales (take rates) of plant-based meals
- Actively tracking greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with meals or proteins served
- A measurable, time-bound target to increase plant-based meals served
- A glidepath to support its plant-based target
- Identified plant-based initiatives in operational standards
- Offering professional development and training to staff related to plant-based education, marketing, recipe development and culinary skills
- Implementing new plant-based recipes or products to utilize annually
- Marketing campaigns focused on plant-based initiatives
- Actively working with an outside organization (such as Humane World for Animals or another organization) to prioritize and support its plant-based initiatives
- Replaced or is actively working to replace eggs and dairy in standard recipes with plant-based ingredients or products

Recommendations:

We commend the UW for its ambitious plant-based achievements and endeavors. We would like to see the university officially implement an operational standard to reduce the portion size of animal proteins served and utilize the plant-based default concept within its dining halls to further increase student take rates.

University of California, Los Angeles

Rank

#10

Score

270

Grade

A

Average plant-based meals

31%-35%

Universitywide goals and commitments

50% of meals offered will be plant-based by 2027.

University of California, Los Angeles has a long-standing commitment to prioritizing sustainability in all aspects of on-campus life. Its dining program boasts a wide variety of delicious plant-based meals and has menus that inform students not only of important information on dietary and allergy restrictions but also of a meal's carbon footprint.

In addition to its goal to offer 50% plant-based meals on its menus, UCLA also has a goal through the UC Office of the President to procure 25% sustainable food and beverage purchases by 2030. The highly popular dining hall, Bruin Plate, has been a space dedicated to serving fresh, wholesome and plant-forward options since 2013, and there are plans to open a new plant-based restaurant as part of the campus's residential dining program.

Plant-based dishes are also often created to closely resemble and match the appeal of their animal-based counterparts to show students that no flavor or familiar favorites need to be sacrificed when choosing plant-based. Meatless Mondays and Beefless Thursdays are promoted throughout various dining halls, and the university's dining team created a "Fighting Climate Change with Food" toolkit to support other institutions in implementing similar, plant-forward menus. It also launched the Impossible Foodprint Project in 2019, wherein it introduced plant-based meat at one of its most popular quick-service restaurants and tracked students' engagement with the new option compared to its animal protein counterpart in multiple entrees. The results included a 54% increase in "Low Carbon Footprint" food choices and a decrease of approximately 16.4 metric tons of CO₂ emissions during the fall quarter—that's the equivalent of driving 42,000 miles!

In collaboration with our Food Service Innovation team, UCLA will be hosting a variety of themed plant-forward meals and events next year to celebrate its commitment to sustainable menus. It currently employs various marketing strategies to engage students in plant-based options, including table tents, digital posters and other signage that educate students on the global impacts of their food choices and the benefits of reducing animal products in their diets. Operation standards also outline a variety of principles to improve and promote plant-based options, including reducing the portion size of animal proteins in meals, enhancing the flavor and visual appeal of plant-based dishes and continuously gathering student feedback to make any menu modifications necessary.

Rank

#10

Score

270

Grade

A

Average plant-based meals

31%-35%

Universitywide goals and commitments

50% of meals offered will be plant-based by 2027.

University of California, Los Angeles verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

- Tracking its plant-based meal percentage
- Actively tracking greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with meals or proteins served
- Measurable, time-bound target to increase plant-based meals served
- A glidepath to support its plant-based target
- Identified plant-based initiatives in operational standards
- Identified reducing the portion size of animal proteins served in operational standards
- Implementing new plant-based recipes or products to utilize annually
- Marketing campaigns focused on plant-based initiatives
- Actively working with an outside organization (such as Humane World for Animals or another organization) to prioritize and support its plant-based initiatives
- Replaced or is actively working to replace eggs and dairy in standard recipes with plant-based ingredients or products

Recommendations:

We applaud UCLA for being a leader in university sustainable dining. We recommend that the university begin tracking the take rates of its plant-based offerings to better understand which options are being well received by students and to measure its overall environmental impact. We also recommend that UCLA implement a default plant-based station or dining hall to expand the take rates and acceptance of plant-based options among students.

The Ohio State University

Rank

#11

Score

260

Grade

B+

Average plant-based meals

36%-40%

Universitywide goals and commitments

The Ohio State University reported internal food-related sustainability goals, which have been reviewed and verified by our team.

The Ohio State University is committed to providing students with a variety of options, including delicious, sustainable and nutritious plant-based offerings. Plant-based initiatives are included in the university’s dining services’ standards, and each dining hall and station has a plant-based meal choice. Notables are the Grains and Greens station and a self-serve location that includes a wide range of healthy, plant-based components such as quinoa, brown rice, black beans, veggies, kelp burgers, breaded tofu, plant-based chicken and falafel. Other locations offer options including plant-based chorizo and beef, tofu, veggie burgers, grains and beans.

Ohio State’s production kitchen offers a four-week rotation of grab-and-go plant-based items for café locations, which include salads and sandwiches such as curried chickpea wraps and asparagus-and-hummus wraps. Ohio State is also a member of the Menus of Change University Research Collaborative, wherein it supports other universities in making similar plant-forward menu changes. The institution is also working to incorporate plant-based culinary training for staff.

Rank

#11

Score

260

Grade

B+

Average plant-based meals

36%-40%

Universitywide goals and commitments

The Ohio State University reported internal food-related sustainability goals, which have been reviewed and verified by our team.

The Ohio State University verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

- Tracking its plant-based meal percentage
- A measurable, time-bound target to increase plant-based meals served
- A glidepath to support its plant-based target
- Identified plant-based initiatives in operational standards
- Offering professional development and training to staff related to plant-based education, marketing, recipe development and culinary skills
- Implementing new plant-based recipes or products to utilize annually
- Marketing campaigns focused on plant-based initiatives
- Utilizing plant-based proteins as the default with the option to add meat and dairy within one of its dining halls or dining stations
- Actively working with an outside organization (such as Humane World for Animals or another organization) to prioritize and support its plant-based initiatives
- Replaced or is actively working to replace eggs and dairy in standard recipes with plant-based ingredients or products

Recommendations:

Ohio State's dining operation is committed to serving healthy, sustainable options, and we look forward to its growth and leadership in this space among its peers. We recommend its dining program track the environmental impacts from its menus and procurement policies to better shape its future sustainability plans. We also encourage it to track the sales (take rates) of its plant-based offerings to ensure their ongoing success and customer satisfaction.

University of Georgia

Rank

#12

Score

230

Grade

B+

Average plant-based meals

31%-35%

Universitywide goals and commitments

Unknown

University of Georgia reports a comprehensive approach to sustainability in dining, providing diverse and nutritious plant-based options across campus. Approximately one-third of UGA’s daily meal offerings are currently plant-based, and every dining location includes a vegetarian line that features a variety of plant-based options, all of which are conveniently listed on the dining team’s website for students’ convenience. UGA also uses vertical aeroponic gardens and collaborates with the student-run campus garden, incorporating these locally sourced fresh greens and herbs into dining and retail options.

In addition to its whole food and alternative meat plant-based proteins, UGA has adjusted its animal protein servings by refining portion sizes. The operation has also switched from dairy butter to margarine in most baked goods recipes.

The dining team promotes plant-based offerings through targeted marketing campaigns using posters, social media and informational displays, all of which are often in partnership with the UGA Office of Sustainability.

While UGA reported a goal to transition 36%-40% of its menus to be plant-based, no supplemental documentation was provided to confirm this target by the publication of this report; therefore, no points were awarded.

Rank

#12

Score

230

Grade

B+

Average plant-based meals

31%-35%

Universitywide goals and commitments

Unknown

University of Georgia verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

- Tracking its plant-based meal percentage
- Tracking sales (take rates) of plant-based meals
- A measurable, time-bound target to increase plant-based meals served
- Identified plant-based initiatives in operational standards
- Identified reducing the portion size of animal proteins served in operational standards
- Offering professional development and training to staff related to plant-based education, marketing, recipe development and culinary skills
- Implementing new plant-based recipes or products to utilize annually
- Marketing campaigns focused on plant-based initiatives
- Utilizing plant-based proteins as the default with the option to add meat and dairy within one of its dining halls or dining stations
- Actively working with an outside organization (such as Humane World for Animals or another organization) to prioritize and support its plant-based initiatives
- Replaced or is actively working to replace eggs and dairy in standard recipes with plant-based ingredients or products

Recommendations:

We encourage University of Georgia to confirm its self-reported plant-based menu development goal by creating public, time-bound language around it and an accompanying glidepath to track its progress. To further strengthen its leadership in sustainable dining, we also recommend UGA begin tracking the greenhouse gas emissions associated with its dining operations to better measure and communicate its environmental impact.

University of California, San Diego

Rank

#13

Score

205

Grade

B

Average plant-based meals

10%-15%

Universitywide goals and commitments

None.

Among many impressive sustainability initiatives put forth by University of California, San Diego, its dining team proudly boasts Roots, the only fully plant-based dining hall within the University of California school system. Here, students can enjoy a variety of plant-based and allergen-friendly entrees and sides for every meal period.

As a globally ranked research university and proud partner of the Menus of Change University Research Collaborative, UC San Diego is actively tracking its plant-based menu offerings and student engagement with these options. Its “Rooted in Flavor” concept promotes principles of healthy and sustainable menus, including goals around increased purchasing of plant-based items and reduced purchasing of beef and pork.

Removing any surcharge for plant-based milks in its coffee bars has also increased student take rates of these options, which is projected to save more than 20 million liters of water consumption over the next several years.

To keep its finger on the pulse, UC San Diego works with students and other members of the campus community regularly to identify desired menu options, locate farms and other food sources locally and promote sustainable and healthy food options on campus. Since 1978, its student-run Food Co-op has been a plant-forward food store that features a fresh, organic salad bar, bagels, soups and other plant-based foods and beverages. UC San Diego also has a goal through the UC Office of the President to procure 30% sustainable food and beverage purchases by 2030 and is planning a Veganuary 2025 menu pilot to test new and innovative plant-based products.

Rank

#13

Score

205

Grade

B

Average plant-based meals

10%-15%

Universitywide goals and commitments

None.

University of California, San Diego verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

- Tracking its plant-based meal percentage
- Tracking sales (take rates) of plant-based meals
- Actively tracking greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with meals or proteins served
- Identified plant-based initiatives in operational standards
- Identified reducing the portion size of animal proteins served in operational standards
- Implementing new plant-based recipes or products to utilize annually
- Marketing campaigns focused on plant-based initiatives
- Utilizing plant-based proteins as the default with the option to add meat and dairy within one of its dining halls or dining stations
- Actively working with an outside organization (such as Humane World for Animals or another organization) to prioritize and support its plant-based initiatives
- Replaced or is actively working to replace eggs and dairy in standard recipes with plant-based ingredients or products

Recommendations:

UC San Diego is making great strides toward creating a more sustainable food service program. We recommend that the university set a measurable, time-bound goal to increase its plant-based meals, as well as invest in staff education related to plant-based proteins, ingredients and recipes.

University of Maryland, College Park

Rank

#14

Score

195

Grade

B

Average plant-based meals

Unknown

Universitywide goals and commitments

None.

University of Maryland, College Park reports an impressive target to reduce its food-related greenhouse gas emissions by 25% by 2030. In addition to being a member of the Menus of Change University Research Collaborative, wherein it supports other universities in making similar plant-forward menu changes, the institution has two carbon-neutral dining facilities.

UMCP reports a dedicated plant-based station at each of its main dining halls and ensures that all daily specials include a plant-based option. The university hosts events that focus on low-impact meals, highlighting that a single person's actions affect the planet in a significant way. The university regularly conducts focus groups with students to continuously improve its plant-based offerings.

University of Maryland, College Park verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

- Actively tracking greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with meals or proteins served
- Identified plant-based initiatives in operational standards
- Identified reducing the portion size of animal proteins served in operational standards
- Implementing new plant-based recipes or products to utilize annually
- Marketing campaigns focused on plant-based initiatives
- Actively tracking greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with meals or proteins served

Recommendations:

We applaud University of Maryland, College Park's target to reduce food-related greenhouse gas emissions, and we encourage the program to remove its inclusion of local meat purchasing in that target to reach its goals more quickly. We recommend that the university consider a plant-based default station and work to replace eggs and dairy in standard recipes across campus for allergens, inclusivity and sustainability.

University of California, Davis

Rank

#15

Score

190

Grade

B

Average plant-based meals

16%-20%

Universitywide goals and commitments

None.

As one of the largest agricultural schools in the country, University of California, Davis is a leader in developing new and innovative ways to improve our food system. Its renowned agricultural and environmental science programs led the operation to launch the Integrative Center for Alternative Meat and Protein (iCAMP) this year, which aims to accelerate the commercialization of alternative proteins worldwide. This center demonstrates UC Davis' commitment to creating a more humane, sustainable food system that can continue feeding our world's growing population for decades to come.

On campus, its dining team has implemented a variety of initiatives to shift student demand toward plant-based options, including a comprehensive marketing strategy, plant-based default stations at each dining hall, and the introduction of dozens of new recipes each year that expand students' palettes and expose them to plant-based cuisines from all over the world.

As a member of the Menus of Change University Research Collaborative, wherein it supports other universities in making similar plant-forward menu change, UC Davis is committed to tracking and reducing its school's food-related greenhouse gas emissions from protein purchases by 2030. This goal includes but is not limited to moving legumes and nuts to the center of the plate; serving red meat in smaller portion sizes and less often; and making whole, intact grains the new norm.

UC Davis also has a goal through the UC Office of the President to procure 25% sustainable, plant-forward food and beverage purchases by 2030 while maintaining accessibility and affordability for all students and other food service patrons. To achieve these goals, the university involves its chefs in culinary conferences and trainings throughout the year, partnering with the Culinary Institute of America, Menus of Change and World of Flavors to ensure its team is well-equipped to create healthy, delicious and globally inspired plant-based options.

Rank

#15

Score

190

Grade

B

Average plant-based meals

16%-20%

Universitywide goals and commitments

None.

University of California, Davis verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

- Tracking its plant-based meal percentage
- Tracking sales (take rates) of plant-based meals
- Tracking greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with meals or proteins served
- Identified plant-based initiatives in operational standards
- Identified reducing the portion size of animal proteins served in operational standards
- Offering professional development and training to staff related to plant-based education, marketing, recipe development and culinary skills
- Implementing new plant-based recipes or products to utilize annually
- Marketing campaigns focused on plant-based initiatives
- Utilizing plant-based proteins as the default with the option to add meat and dairy within one of its dining halls or dining stations
- Actively working with an outside organization (such as Humane World for Animals or another organization) to prioritize and support its plant-based initiatives
- Replaced or is actively working to replace eggs and dairy in standard recipes with plant-based ingredients or products

Recommendations:

UC Davis is clearly committed to creating a more sustainable food service program. We recommend that the university set a measurable, time-bound goal to increase its plant-based meals and work with an outside organization such as Humane World for Animals for resources and support. Additionally, UC Davis should formally identify its plant-based initiatives in operational standards.

University of Southern California

As one of the largest and most esteemed private schools in the country, University of Southern California prides itself on its renowned academic and athletic programs as well as its commitment to sustainable practices and community health.

The university's partnership with the Menus of Change University Research Collaboration, wherein it supports other universities in making similar plant-forward menu changes, encourages students to opt for more fruits and vegetables at every meal, with its "EatWell" initiative offering students an easy guide to find these healthier, plant-forward options around campus. In the USC Village Dining Hall, the university also boasts a fully plant-based station, while other stations restrict animal protein portions to no more than 4 ounces per serving.

USC also promotes "EcoMonday" each week, wherein red meat is not served on the menus at its three main dining halls, and the dining operation instead highlights sustainable, plant-forward meals on social media. During all mealtimes, popular animal proteins are served by staff to limit students' portion sizes of these items, and plant-based meals are promoted throughout the dining halls with educational posters and table tents.

University of Southern California verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

- Tracking its plant-based meal percentage
- Identified plant-based initiatives in operational standards
- Identified reducing the portion size of animal proteins served in operational standards
- Offering professional development and training to staff related to plant-based education, marketing, recipe development and culinary skills
- Implementing new plant-based recipes or products to utilize annually
- Marketing campaigns focused on plant-based initiatives
- Utilizing plant-based proteins as the default with the option to add meat and dairy within one of its dining halls or dining stations

Rank

#15

Score

190

Grade

B

Average plant-based meals

31%-35%

Universitywide goals and commitments

None.

Recommendations:

USC is making great strides toward creating a more sustainable dining program. We recommend that USC set a measurable, time-bound goal to increase its plant-based meals and begin tracking the take rates of its plant-based offerings. We also recommend that USC begin working to replace eggs and dairy in standard recipes with plant-based ingredients or products.

University of Wisconsin–Madison

Rank

#16

Score

185

Grade

B

Average plant-based meals

21%-25%

Universitywide goals and commitments

30% of meals offered will be plant-based by 2025.

University of Wisconsin–Madison is committed to offering plant-based options in all of its marketplace-style dining locations. Its dining operation also adjusts its menu offerings each semester, which naturally drives new and innovative plant-based offerings.

UW–Madison set a goal in 2021 to serve 30% plant-based meals by 2025, and culinary leadership and staff engage in plant-based professional development to work toward its goal. UW–Madison has participated in plant-based culinary trainings with our team, which focused on incorporating new plant-based products on its menus and innovating new recipes using whole food, plant-based protein foundations. The university has also worked with our team at Humane World for Animals and professional services firm WSP to calculate greenhouse gas emissions for specific recipes. Feedback is regularly solicited from students through means such as focus groups, and marketing and social media engagement help educate students on the plant-based options available.

University of Wisconsin–Madison verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

- Tracking its plant-based meal percentage
- A measurable, time-bound target to increase plant-based meals served
- A glidepath to support its plant-based target
- Identified plant-based initiatives in operational standards
- Offering professional development and training to staff related to plant-based education, marketing, recipe development and culinary skills
- Implementing new plant-based recipes or products to utilize annually
- Marketing campaigns focusing on plant-based initiatives

Recommendations:

UW–Madison provides rich, varied and plentiful plant-based options. We recommend that the university implement a plant-based default concept within its dining halls to support its current goal and further increase student take rates. Additionally, we recommend the university continue to emphasize its sustainable offerings by increasing its menu development goal to 50% plant-based options, achievable through 2027 or beyond.

Indiana University Bloomington

Indiana University Bloomington self-reported serving an average of 26%-30% plant-based meals but has not yet set a measurable, time-bound goal to increase plant-based meals. Its chefs and dietitians report plant-based options at each concept, and standouts include a variety of vegetable curries, Beyond Burgers, mushroom street tacos, peppers stuffed with veggies and rice, Impossible Chicken sandwiches and hot cakes.

Indiana University Bloomington verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

- Actively tracking greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with the meals (or proteins) served.
- Identified plant-based initiatives in operational standards
- Offering professional development and training to staff related to plant-based education, marketing, recipe development and culinary skills
- Implementing new plant-based recipes or products to utilize annually Marketing campaigns focused on plant-based initiatives
- Replaced or is actively working to replace eggs and dairy in standard recipes with plant-based ingredients or product

Recommendations:

We applaud IU Bloomington for its plant-based offerings, ongoing professional development and efforts to stay abreast of new products available in the market. Given the operation's already high percentage of plant-based meal offerings, IU Bloomington should set a measurable, time-bound goal to increase its plant-based meals to 50% of menu offerings. Additionally, we recommend that IU Bloomington share its calculated food-related environmental impacts in an easily accessible and transparent way when those results are available.

Rank

#17

Score

180

Grade

B

Average plant-based meals

26%-30%

Universitywide goals and commitments

None.

North Carolina State University

Rank

#18

Score

175

Grade

B

Average plant-based meals

36%-40%

Universitywide goals and commitments

None.

North Carolina State University is steadily advancing its plant-based dining initiatives. Action stations across dining halls feature customizable plant-based options, such as Asian and Latin grain bowls, with meat provided as an optional add-on. NC State promotes plant-forward dining through "Plant-Powered Days" each semester and marketing campaigns showcasing new plant-based offerings on social media and dining hall display screens.

The university's dining services team engages in plant-based professional development, collaborating with the Menus of Change University Research Collaborative and hosting on-campus training sessions with groups such as the Mushroom Council. NC State also supports the Agroecology Education Farm, which supplies over 5,000 pounds of produce annually to the dining program. By sponsoring the farm's operations, the university emphasizes the importance of local, sustainable food systems in its dining services.

North Carolina State University verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

- Identified plant-based initiatives in operational standards
- Offering professional development and training to staff related to plant-based education, marketing, recipe development and culinary skills
- Implementing new plant-based recipes or products to utilize annually
- Marketing campaigns focused on plant-based initiatives
- Utilizing plant-based proteins as the default with the option to add meat and dairy within one of its dining halls or dining stations
- Actively working with an outside organization (such as Humane World for Animals or another organization) to prioritize and support its plant-based initiatives

Recommendations:

NC State is a commendable leader in the South. We especially applaud its successful efforts offering plant-based defaults. To further the dining operations impact, NC State should set a measurable, time-bound goal to increase its plant-based meals and implement greenhouse gas emissions tracking to monitor the environmental impact of its dining operations.

University of Nebraska–Lincoln

Rank

#19

Score

160

Grade

C+

Average plant-based meals

Unknown

Universitywide goals and commitments

None.

University of Nebraska–Lincoln reported a commitment to providing plant-based options at all dining centers and markets. All six stations within its dining program have plated or made-to-order plant-based offerings.

The culinary staff at UNL participate in professional development opportunities to improve their awareness of plant-based options and how to best menu them. In the past, the university has participated in our virtual product trainings, Veganuary training and menu pilot and has attended several of our webinars. The dining program’s registered dietitian regularly engages with students to provide education and information about healthy, sustainable menu options.

University of Nebraska–Lincoln verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

- Identified plant-based initiatives in operational standards
- Offering professional development and training to staff related to plant-based education, marketing, recipe development and culinary skills
- Implementing new plant-based recipes or products to utilize annually
- Marketing campaigns focused on plant-based initiatives

Recommendations:

We applaud UNL for offering plant-based options at all dining locations and seeking professional training opportunities for culinary staff. We recommend that the university continue to expand offerings by setting a measurable, time-bound goal to increase plant-based meals and working with an outside organization such as Humane World for Animals for resources and support. Additional recommendations would be to enhance plant-based education for staff and students and increase transparency on food-related sustainability efforts.

Colorado State University

Rank

#20

Score

125

Grade

C+

Average plant-based meals

Less than 5%

Universitywide goals and commitments

None.

Colorado State University reported on several plant-based menu initiatives, and its operational standards include offering a plant-based menu option at every station and across all categories in its retail markets. However, it does not currently have an accurate method for tracking its total offerings and may be offering more plant-based options than were reported in the limited data supplied.

CSU's dining operation markets healthy and sustainable plant-based menu offerings through its "Environmental Eats" program, including hosting samplings, providing education and promoting these options through social media, handouts and campus events. It serves a wide range of plant-based baked goods and plant-based egg products. The university also tracks its plant-based take rates and food-related nitrogen emissions.

Colorado State University verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

- Tracking its plant-based meal percentage
- Tracking sales (take rates) of plant-based meals
- Actively tracking greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with meals or proteins served
- Identified plant-based initiatives in operational standards
- Implementing new plant-based recipes or products to utilize annually
- Marketing campaigns focused on plant-based initiatives
- Utilizing plant-based proteins as the default with the option to add meat and dairy within one of its dining halls or dining stations
- Replaced or is actively working to replace eggs and dairy in standard recipes with plant-based ingredients or products

Recommendations:

CSU should set a measurable, time-bound goal to increase its plant-based meals and work with an outside organization such as Humane World for Animals for resources and support. The university is well poised to build on its current sustainability efforts such as its "Earth-Friendly Dining" labels and "Environmental Eats" program by placing a greater emphasis on the impact of increasing plant-based meals. Furthermore, CSU should implement a more accurate method for tracking its plant-based meals to increase visibility.

Georgia State University

Rank

#21

Score

120

Grade

C

Average plant-based meals

16%-20%

Universitywide goals and commitments

None.

Georgia State University emphasizes health and sustainability through its “PantherDining” program. Each dining hall includes at least one fully plant-based service line, with a plant-based offering at every other station as well and plans to expand to two offerings per station by fiscal year 2026.

The university also replaces eggs and dairy in some recipes with plant-based alternatives and offers educational resources such as cooking classes and individual nutrition counseling for students. GSU’s marketing team promotes plant-based dining through social media campaigns, signage and events including taste tests for new plant-based menu items, boosting visibility and engagement with students.

Georgia State University verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

- Tracking its plant-based meal percentage
- Identified plant-based initiatives in operational standards
- Offering professional development and training to staff related to plant-based education, marketing, recipe development and culinary skills
- Implementing new plant-based recipes or products to utilize annually
- Marketing campaigns focused on plant-based initiatives
- Replaced or is actively working to replace eggs and dairy in standard recipes with plant-based ingredients or products

Recommendations:

GSU should set a measurable, time-bound goal to increase its plant-based meals and work with an outside organization such as Humane World for Animals for resources and support. We also recommend that GSU track the sales (take rates) of its plant-based options and the greenhouse gas emissions associated with its menus to monitor the environmental impact of its dining operations.

University at Buffalo

Rank

#22

Score

115

Grade

C

Average plant-based meals

Unknown

Universitywide goals and commitments

None.

All colleges and universities included in this report were notified and asked to submit survey answers over the course of the four months. Institutions that did not submit reports were scored based on publicly available information through the institutions’ websites and/or sustainability ratings. University at Buffalo did not submit a scorecard, so its score was compiled from publicly available information.

According to its dining website, UB uses carbon labeling for various food items and uses marketing campaigns focusing on plant-based initiatives, such as “Plant-Powered Mondays” and the “Strictly Vegetarian” concept to ensure that plant-forward options are available across campus.

University at Buffalo verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

None.

Recommendations:

UB should update its website for full transparency. If the institution does not have any targets around increasing plant-based menu offerings or reducing animal protein purchases, we recommend starting with a public, measurable plant-based goal and timeline, and increased transparency on food-related sustainability efforts.

Brigham Young University

Brigham Young University's mission promotes the Word of Wisdom, a revelation on healthy practices that include "eating meat sparingly" and focusing on environmental stewardship.

Reporting an impressive 31%-35% plant-based meals already being served on its menus, BYU also detailed its plant-forward restaurant bowl concept called "Choices" and the marketing campaign "Eat, Act, Think," which educates students on low-impact food choices through labeling, signage, digital billboards and tabletop advertisements.

The university's dining operation also utilizes choice architecture to nudge students to select healthier options in its main dining hall and engages student focus groups to assist with designing its menus.

Brigham Young University verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

- Tracking its plant-based meal percentage
- Offering professional development and training to staff related to plant-based education, marketing, recipe development and culinary skills
- Implementing new plant-based recipes or products to utilize annually
- Marketing campaigns focused on plant-based initiatives
- Utilizing plant-based proteins as the default with the option to add meat and dairy within one of its dining halls or dining stations
- Actively working with an outside organization (such as Humane World for Animals or another organization) to prioritize and support its plant-based initiatives

Recommendations:

BYU has taken creditable first steps to create a more sustainable food service operation and is well poised to set a measurable, time-bound goal to further increase its plant-based meals. Additionally, BYU has an opportunity to better align its dining program standards with the university's overarching commitment to environmental stewardship by tracking its food-related greenhouse gas emissions.

Rank

#23

Score

110

Grade

C

Average plant-based meals

31%-35%

Universitywide goals and commitments

None.

The University of Oklahoma

Rank

#24

Score

85

Grade

C

Average plant-based meals

5%-9%

Universitywide goals and commitments

None.

The University of Oklahoma reports steadily introducing plant-based dining options to support campus sustainability. It clarified that all dining locations, including grab-and-go areas, feature at least one plant-based option.

OU also shares information on the health and environmental benefits of plant-based meals, hosting informational tables to engage students directly. Its food services team has branded posters, flyers and other materials that directly compare plant and animal proteins in terms of their health and environmental impacts, encouraging students to learn more about their food choices and opt for the plant-based options as often as possible.

The University of Oklahoma verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

- Tracking its plant-based meal percentage
- Tracking sales (take rates) of plant-based meals
- Identified plant-based initiatives in operational standards
- Implementing new plant-based recipes or products to utilize annually

Recommendations:

To expand its impact, we recommend that OU set a measurable, time-bound goal to increase plant-based meals and work with an outside organization such as Humane World for Animals to support its food-related sustainability initiatives. OU could further enhance visibility and engagement by developing marketing campaigns around its plant-based offerings and training staff on plant-based culinary techniques.

The Pennsylvania State University

Rank

#25

Score

80

Grade

C

Average plant-based meals

Unknown

Universitywide goals and commitments

None.

The Pennsylvania State University previously collaborated with our Food Service Innovation team in 2023, with its dining operation having set a target to increase plant-based meals on its menus to 35% by 2025. Penn State rescinded its pledge soon after.

Upon receiving the survey for this report, Penn State’s dining operation clarified with our team that its previous targets are no longer in place and were removed to set internal, campuswide sustainability goals to include food-related targets. The university’s dining operation offered no further details for transparency and opted out of participating in this year’s survey.

From its website, the university’s dining operation appears to offer plant-based options at every meal at all dining commons on campus and states that its goal is to have at least one plant-based entree, soup and side on all menus. According to the AASHE STARS report, the registered dietitian’s office posts daily examples of balanced meals, often highlighting and encouraging plant-based options.

The Pennsylvania State University verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

None.

Recommendations:

Penn State should update its website for full transparency. If the institution does not have any targets around increasing plant-based menu offerings or reducing animal protein purchases, we recommend starting with a public, measurable plant-based goal and timeline, and increased transparency on food-related sustainability efforts.

University of Connecticut

Rank

#25

Score

80

Grade

C

Average plant-based meals

Unknown

Universitywide goals and commitments

None.

All colleges and universities included in this report were notified and asked to submit survey answers over the course of the four months. Institutions that did not submit reports were scored based on publicly available information through the institutions' websites and/or sustainability ratings. University of Connecticut did not submit a scorecard, so its score was compiled from publicly available information.

According to the AASHE STARS report and the university's dining website, plant-based initiatives are identified in operational standards. Its plant-forward cafe, Crossroads, and its food truck, Food for Thought, emphasize plant-based meals.

University of Connecticut verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

None.

Recommendations:

UConn should update its website for full transparency. If the institution does not have any targets around increasing plant-based menu offerings or reducing animal protein purchases, we recommend starting with a public, measurable plant-based goal and timeline, and increased transparency on food-related sustainability efforts.

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Rank

#25

Score

80

Grade

C

Average plant-based meals

Unknown

Universitywide goals and commitments

None.

All colleges and universities included in this report were notified and asked to submit survey answers over the course of the four months. Institutions that did not submit reports were scored based on publicly available information through the institutions' websites and/or sustainability ratings. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University did not submit a scorecard, so its score was compiled from publicly available information.

According to the AASHE STARS report and information on its dining website, Virginia Tech identifies plant-based initiatives in operational standards and implements new plant-based recipes and products annually. Diverse, complete-protein, plant-based options are available across campus at every meal, and the university uses marketing campaigns that focus on plant-based initiatives to further engage students with these options.

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

None.

Recommendations:

Virginia Tech should update its website for full transparency. If the institution does not have any targets around increasing plant-based menu offerings or reducing animal protein purchases, we recommend starting with a public, measurable plant-based goal and timeline, and increased transparency on food-related sustainability efforts.

The University of Oregon

Rank

#26

Score

65

Grade

D+

Average plant-based meals

Unknown

Universitywide goals and commitments

None.

All colleges and universities included in this report were notified and asked to submit survey answers over the course of the four months. Institutions that did not submit reports were scored based on publicly available information through the institutions' websites and/or sustainability ratings. The University of Oregon did not submit a scorecard, so its score was compiled from publicly available information.

According to the AASHE STARS report, The UO promotes "Low Carbon menus through identifying Low Carbon Impact menu items." The report also mentions that the institution holds an annual Low Carbon Footprint week to "promote and feature plant-forward

The University of Oregon verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

None.

Recommendations:

The UO should update its website for full transparency. If the institution does not have any targets around increasing plant-based menu offerings or reducing animal protein purchases, we recommend starting with a public, measurable plant-based goal and timeline and increased transparency on food-related sustainability efforts.

Michigan State University

Rank

#27

Score

60

Grade

D+

Average plant-based meals

Unknown

Universitywide goals and commitments

None.

All colleges and universities included in this report were notified and asked to submit survey answers over the course of the four months. Institutions that did not submit reports were scored based on publicly available information through the institutions' websites and/or sustainability ratings. Michigan State University did not submit a scorecard, so its score was compiled from publicly available information.

According to the AASHE STARS report, MSU requires "plant-based complete plate options available during all meal periods in all locations." Additionally, the report mentions the institution previously hosted a symposium on plant-forward menus and hosts events for students and staff focused on "wholesome vegetarian and vegan choices."

Michigan State University verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

None.

Recommendations:

MSU should update its website for full transparency. If the institution does not have any targets around increasing plant-based menu offerings or reducing animal protein purchases, we recommend starting with a public, measurable plant-based goal and timeline, and increased transparency on food-related sustainability efforts.

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Rank

#27

Score

60

Grade

D+

Average plant-based meals

Unknown

Universitywide goals and commitments

None.

All colleges and universities included in this report were notified and asked to submit survey answers over the course of the four months. Institutions that did not submit reports were scored based on publicly available information through the institutions' websites and/or sustainability ratings. University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign did not submit a scorecard, so its score was compiled from publicly available information.

According to the AASHE STARS report, UI has “worked to reduce high impact proteins, such as those from ruminant animals” on its menus. Additionally, the report mentions that the institution offers “multiple vegan entrees and sides at every meal.”

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

None.

Recommendations:

UI should update its website for full transparency. If the institution does not have any targets around increasing plant-based menu offerings or reducing animal protein purchases, we recommend starting with a public, measurable plant-based goal and timeline, and increased transparency on food-related sustainability efforts.

San Diego State University

Rank

#28

Score

50

Grade

D+

Average plant-based meals

Unknown

Universitywide goals and commitments

None.

All colleges and universities included in this report were notified and asked to submit survey answers over the course of the four months. Institutions that did not submit reports were scored based on publicly available information through the institutions' websites and/or sustainability ratings. San Diego State University did not submit a scorecard, so its score was compiled from publicly available information.

According to the AASHE STARS report, SDSU "has vegan options available and clearly labeled" at every dining location and "employs a student plant-based ambassador" on campus. Upperclassmen at the institution also published a campus vegan guide that outlines where students can find plant-based options both on campus and in the community.

San Diego State University verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

None.

Recommendations:

SDSU should update its website for full transparency. If the institution does not have any targets around increasing plant-based menu offerings or reducing animal protein purchases, we recommend starting with a public, measurable plant-based goal and timeline, and increased transparency on food-related sustainability efforts.

Oklahoma State University

Rank

#29

Score

40

Grade

D+

Average plant-based meals

Unknown

Universitywide goals and commitments

None.

All colleges and universities included in this report were notified and asked to submit survey answers over the course of the four months. Institutions that did not submit reports were scored based on publicly available information through the institutions' websites and/or sustainability ratings. Oklahoma State University did not submit a scorecard, so its score was compiled from publicly available information.

According to the AASHE STARS report, OSU "offers complete-protein vegan options" at every meal.

Oklahoma State University verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

None.

Recommendations:

OSU should update its website for full transparency. If the institution does not have any targets around increasing plant-based menu offerings or reducing animal protein purchases, we recommend starting with a public, measurable plant-based goal and timeline, and increased transparency on food-related sustainability efforts.

Iowa State University of Science and Technology

Rank

#30

Score

20

Grade

D

Average plant-based meals

Unknown

Universitywide goals and commitments

None.

All colleges and universities included in this report were notified and asked to submit survey answers over the course of the four months. Institutions that did not submit reports were scored based on publicly available information through the institutions' websites and/or sustainability ratings. Iowa State University did not submit a scorecard, so its score was compiled from publicly available information.

According to the AASHE STARS report, ISU "strives to feature plant-based proteins on all menus, ensuring that all locations are able to accommodate vegan and vegetarian options."

Iowa State University of Science and Technology verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

None.

Recommendations:

ISU should update its website for full transparency. If the institution does not have any targets around increasing plant-based menu offerings or reducing animal protein purchases, we recommend starting with a public, measurable plant-based goal and timeline, and increased transparency on food-related sustainability efforts.

Purdue University

Rank

#30

Score

20

Grade

D

Average plant-based meals

Unknown

Universitywide goals and commitments

None.

All colleges and universities included in this report were notified and asked to submit survey answers over the course of the four months. Institutions that did not submit reports were scored based on publicly available information through the institutions' websites and/or sustainability ratings. Purdue University did not submit a scorecard, so its score was compiled from publicly available information.

According to the AASHE STARS report, PU offers "Simple Servings stations" daily that provide "a complete-protein vegan option." The report also mentions dedicated vegetarian stations and customizable self-serve options.

Purdue University verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

None.

Recommendations:

PU should update its website for full transparency. If the institution does not have any targets around increasing plant-based menu offerings or reducing animal protein purchases, we recommend starting with a public, measurable plant-based goal and timeline, and increased transparency on food-related sustainability efforts.

Kennesaw State University

Rank

#31

Score

0

Grade

F

Average plant-based meals

Unknown

Universitywide goals and commitments

None.

All colleges and universities included in this report were notified and asked to submit survey answers over the course of the four months. Institutions that did not submit reports were scored based on publicly available information through the institutions' websites and/or sustainability ratings. Kennesaw State University did not submit a scorecard, so its score was compiled from publicly available information.

Kennesaw State University verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

None.

Recommendations:

KSU should update its website for full transparency. If the institution does not have any targets around increasing plant-based menu offerings or reducing animal protein purchases, we recommend starting with a public, measurable plant-based goal and timeline and increased transparency on food-related sustainability efforts.

Texas Tech University

Rank

#31

Score

0

Grade

F

Average plant-based meals

Unknown

Universitywide goals and commitments

None.

All colleges and universities included in this report were notified and asked to submit survey answers over the course of the four months. Institutions that did not submit reports were scored based on publicly available information through the institutions' websites and/or sustainability ratings. Texas Tech University did not submit a scorecard, so its score was compiled from publicly available information.

Texas Tech University verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

None.

Recommendations:

TTU should update its website for full transparency. If the institution does not have any targets around increasing plant-based menu offerings or reducing animal protein purchases, we recommend starting with a public, measurable plant-based goal and timeline and increased transparency on food-related sustainability efforts.

Utah Valley University

Rank

#31

Score

0

Grade

F

Average plant-based meals

Unknown

Universitywide goals and commitments

None.

All colleges and universities included in this report were notified and asked to submit survey answers over the course of the four months. Institutions that did not submit reports were scored based on publicly available information through the institutions' websites and/or sustainability ratings. Utah Valley University did not submit a scorecard, so its score was compiled from publicly available information.

Utah Valley University verified the following plant-based initiatives with supplemental data and documentation:

None.

Recommendations:

UVU should update its website for full transparency. If the institution does not have any targets around increasing plant-based menu offerings or reducing animal protein purchases, we recommend starting with a public, measurable plant-based goal and timeline and increased transparency on food-related sustainability efforts.

Thanks for your support