



OCT 11

# UMD Farm

Emily Ness

Just outside of Duluth lies UMD’s Sustainable Agriculture Project, also known as the SAP farm. It’s complete with ten half-acre vegetable fields, apple orchards, two beehives, a raised-bed teacher garden, a compost area and a wind turbine.

“SAP is a campus and community laboratory for solutions-oriented research, teaching and public engagement in regionally adaptive food, water, energy and biodiversity systems,” Director of SAP, Randel Hanson, said.

Since it was founded in 2009, SAP has grown significantly. According to Hanson, more than one thousand students participate in the hands-on experiential learning.

This year UMD announced that they will be cutting \$2 million in programs and services, mainly due to a decline in enrollment rates.

One million dollars will be cut from the College of Liberal Arts alone. Hanson is an Assistant Professor in the College of Liberal Arts and is therefore at risk of losing his job along with other cuts. In losing Hanson, UMD would lose its farm.

“Randy is the only person that is crazy, intelligent, passionate and hardworking enough to run this farm on the side of teaching classes,” Student Farm Manager Cameron Gustafson said. “He came up with the vision for this farm back in 2009. If you take the visionary out of the equation, the entire dynamic of what the farm is is at risk.”

SAP collaborates with researchers from humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and engineering on various projects. A handful of community organizations and governmental units also collaborate on numerous affairs.

“The SAP Land Lab has had remarkable success going from a one acre experimental teaching project to the 30 acre campus, community and state model that exists today,” Hanson said.

The farm provides a different style of classroom learning for all ages.

“The farm provides students with an invaluable real-life opportunity to experience things that are impossible to experience in a classroom,” Gustafson said.

In addition to this, SAP provides both the University of Minnesota Duluth and the community with tens of thousands of pounds of produce annually.

Action has been taken to stop the farm from closing. Gustafson along with a number of other students have created a petition addressed to the president of the university system, the chancellor of UMD and the Board of Regents, arguing that the farm is vital to both the school and the community.

“We are in the process of coordinating various meetings between student groups and the administration, so that we can work collaboratively and creatively,” Gustafson said.

UMD plans to announce their final decisions regarding budget cuts at the end of October.

“I’m pretty upset that this is a possibility, but I wholeheartedly believe that this farm is vital to UMD’s mission statement, and absolutely too important for students and community members. I believe that the administration will make the right decision,” Gustafson said.



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