A Greener Approach to Healthcare:
Luther College’s CSA Reimbursement Program

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Overview
Since 2012, Luther College has offered a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Reimbursement Program to its staff and faculty. Recognizing the importance of vegetable consumption as part of a healthy lifestyle, Luther College’s Nena Admundson Wellness Program, the Center for Sustainable Communities, and the Health Care Council co-sponsor this program that provides 50% reimbursement (up to $100) on CSA shares.

Community Supported Agriculture
For more than two decades Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs have been a popular way for consumers to buy local produce directly from farmers. Consumers pay an up-front cost and then receive weekly or biweekly boxes of produce throughout the growing season. Some CSA farms offer market shares where customers can pay up front and draw down an account at the local farmer’s market. There are three CSA farms in Decorah, all of which have participated in this program.

Program Goals
Wellness: By promoting vegetable consumption, Luther College wants to help faculty and staff achieve their wellness goals.

Connections: This program builds community and fosters relationships among faculty and staff through cooking classes and shared experiences.

Economic Development: The program allows faculty and staff to build connections with and support small family farms.

Results
In 2018, Luther College conducted a survey of program participants. Fifty-six percent of the 89 participants returned the survey—30 staff members and 21 faculty. The results revealed the significant impacts that the program has on vegetable consumption, at-home cooking, and wellness.

88% ate more fruits and Veggies
68% reported cooking at home more frequently
88% have participated for more than one year
70% tried a new vegetable

“Awesome program, a unique benefit, and a great way to encourage engagement with and investment in the community. Please keep it going!”
—2018 Program Participant

The CSA Reimbursement Program at Luther College
This program was piloted in 2012 with 37 households. After a successful first year participation grew to 97 households in 2013. Since then, program participants have remained steady at an average of 98 households from 2013 to 2018. All .75 FTE staff and faculty are eligible for this benefit. All participants are required to participate in two food education events in order to qualify for reimbursement. Food education events have included cooking classes, farm tours, work days, and book discussions.

Luther College invests an average of $7,000 into the CSA Reimbursement Program annually. The Wellness Program and the Center for Sustainable Communities each contribute $2,500 towards the project and the Health Care Council pays for the remaining reimbursement costs.

Key Findings:
• 88% of 2018 participants report to have eaten more fruits and vegetables because of the program.
• 68% of participants reported an increase in home cooking.
• 88% have participated for more than one year.
• 70% tried a new vegetable because of the program.

One significant finding was that only 14% of respondents reported that they would buy a CSA share without financial assistance from Luther. Helping employees overcome the barriers to good health practices can be as simple as sharing the cost of their CSA.

Another key finding was that the majority of participants stick with the program. Retention is high, with 88% of respondents reporting that they were repeat participants. This data shows us that investments like the CSA Reimbursement Program can have a lasting effect on employee habits and wellness.

For more info visit: luther.edu/sustainability/food/info/csa