

My Biography

Gordon Brockington

My name is Gordon Brockington and I have been fascinated by sustainable agriculture for years. I am from Charleston, SC, and during high school I conducted a year-long project with the West Ashley Farmers Market to promote education about composting practices. This past summer I took an internship with the Charleston Parks Conservancy and spent a lot of time engaging with volunteers and donating produce to community food kitchens. I took what I learned from those experiences and have applied that knowledge through my years here at Virginia Tech. I am currently in my junior year of studying Environmental Horticulture. Through my studies I have seen the need for the development of more sustainable agricultural practices that provide fresh and nutritious produce to local communities while reducing wasted materials and our carbon footprint. This inspired me to minor in Civic Agriculture and Food Systems, and I have worked closely with the Blacksburg community over the past few years to increase food security and education around healthy and sustainable eating practices.

This past semester I worked closely with Toni Sperry, co-founder of Pod Farms and an employee of Virginia Tech to design and build a hydroponics system for the Blacksburg Community Garden (BCG). She and I spent many hours tracking down PVC pipe in Lowe's and visiting hydroponics supplies stores for advice and system parts. I built the system in the BCG's solar greenhouse and did a presentation to my peers and professors. This project was my Capstone for my minor as well as an independent study project for the Sustainability Scholars Program, to which I was accepted this year. The Sustainability Scholars Program will end in May 2021, and between now and then I plan to design and build a second system, one that I can set up in my apartment and begin growing and selling my own produce.

As for my career ambitions, I would love to one day own my own greenhouse or controlled environment agriculture business. I hope to start it small in this next semester and have it grow with me as I leave undergrad and pursue graduate school and beyond. I am currently taking courses to help me in this endeavor such as Small Business Management, Greenhouse Management, and Plant Propagation. An internship or job opportunity related to the field of hydroponics or controlled environment agriculture would be ideal for me, but I also want to remain community-focused and not lose sight of the civic engagement needed within a community to sustain a business. I would also love to be able to donate some of what I eventually grow to community food kitchens or food pantries, like I participated in this last summer with my Charleston Parks Conservancy internship.