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For Immediate Release

Governors State University Opening Sustainable Community Garden

University Park, Illinois, May 20, 2013 - Grab your gardening gloves and head to Governors State University's organic community garden, opening this spring on GSU's main campus in University Park.

The University Sustainable Garden will give area residents a chance to grow a wide variety of vegetables using fully organic methods. The university is initiating the project to empower individuals and families to make healthy choices, build a sense of community, and provide a space to grow food in a custom-designed garden.

"GSU is very excited about our new community garden that will use sustainable methods to produce healthy food for members of our community and their families," said Kevin Barto, GSU's Assistant Director for Grounds Management and Custodial Services, who is directing construction of the project.

"We are expecting a mix of veteran and first-time gardeners and anticipate the garden to be a learning community that not only produces locally grown, healthy food, but also provides social interaction and active movement opportunities for participants. All of these aspects are essential in promoting a positive, personal health lifestyle."

Barto said the area chosen for the University Sustainable Garden, located southeast of GSU's Family Development Center, has been farmed in the past. The garden will include 52 plots ranging from 35 square feet for beginners to 400 square feet for experienced gardeners. A subset of plots will be designated for GSU students to sustain a Student Food Pantry, for the Family Development Center to educate young children on growing their own food, and for the university's College of Health and Human Services, which is developing a raised, fully-accessible garden.

In developing the community garden, GSU is partnering with the national "Let's Move!" campaign, a comprehensive initiative, launched by First Lady Michelle Obama, that is dedicated to solving the problem of childhood obesity within a generation. By promoting healthy lifestyles, the GSU community garden is following the goals of "Let's Move!"

GSU will provide water to the University Sustainable Garden. Gardeners must bring their own tools, plants, and/or seeds. Gardeners must agree to follow organic gardening principles; GSU will provide a list of products that will be allowed at the community garden. Gardeners seeking assistance will be directed to resources from the University of Illinois Extension Service, American Community Garden Association, and other organizations.

To be eligible for a garden plot, gardeners pay a nominal fee, from $10 to $20 depending on plot size, and agree to the rules and policies of the community garden by May 31. Garden plots are available on a first come, first served basis.

The University Sustainable Garden will be open from dawn to dusk between May and October. The planting deadline is July 1. Gardens left unplanted on July 1 will be cleared and made available for reassignment to current gardens for fall planting only.

GSU's Office of Facilities Development and Management staff will oversee the seasonal operation of the garden and annual tilling of all plots.

To apply for a garden plot, visit www.govst.edu/garden or contact the GSU Facilities Development and Management department at (708) 534-4515.

Governors State University is located at 1 University Parkway, University Park, Illinois.