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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Chicago State's Emmanuel Pratt featured at First Lady's food summit

Today's Rust Belt can become tomorrow's Fresh Coast with proven aquaponics urban farms

(CHICAGO) — When First Lady Michelle Obama, several big-city mayors, and food and sustainability experts converge on Chicago Tuesday to drill down for answers to feeding America, CSU's Emmanuel Pratt will bring proven solutions to the drawing board.

As director of Chicago State's aquaponics center and executive director of Milwaukee-based Sweet Water Foundation, Pratt will detail how aquaponics plays a key role in urban agriculture by feeding a growing population, while saving the environment through increased water efficiency and smarter land use.

"We need to change the perception of how we see our communities and cities," Pratt says of the Midwest's lost industry and neighborhood blight. "Aquaponics provides the chance to envision new 21st century neighborhoods and cities transformed from the Rust Belt to the Fresh Coast."

Just what is "aquaponics" exactly? Aquaponics turns waste into a community resource by raising fish, such as tilapia, in the same environment as plants, such as lettuce or basil. Fish waste is absorbed as nutrients by edible plants that clean the water in which fish live. This continuous-loop process creates a natural balance known as homeostasis. Aquaponics requires 80 percent less water than traditional farming and produces food faster — up to a 35-day cycle from about 45-50 days traditionally.

Pratt's projects include:

- The current transformation of a 20,000+ square foot warehouse space at Chicago State into

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a living laboratory for aquaponics and urban agriculture.

- Chicago State’s work with the USDA in developing an urban agriculture track for undergraduate and graduate students to equip them for emerging green industries.
- Sweet Water Organics and the Sweet Water Foundation’s participation in the Smarter Cities global competition, featuring the benefits of urban agriculture and aquaponics.
- Pratt’s work with urban school systems employing intergenerational and interdisciplinary educational programming with a focus on community and economic development, health/wellness, STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), and environmental stewardship concerning local and global themes of food, soil, water and energy.

Pratt earned his bachelor’s degree in architecture from Cornell University, and his master of science degree in Architecture and Urban Design from Columbia University. He is presently in his fifth year of doctoral work in urban planning at Columbia. His work has explored urbanization, race/identity, gentrification, and most recently transformative processes of community development through intersections of food security and sustainable design innovation.

Links about Sweet Water Foundation and Sweet Water Organics

- Sweet Water Organics (for-profit entity) on “[NBC Nightly News](#)”
- Sweet Water Foundation (non-profit entity) on “[NBC Nightly News](#)”
- Sweet Water Organics on [NPR](#)
- Sweet Water Foundation on [WUWM](#)

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