



Food Waste at UCI Housing and Dining

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Introduction

Food Waste contributes a large portion of solid municipal waste at UCI. With the goal of reaching zero waste by 2020, food waste at dining halls, retail dining areas, and at the homes of students needs to be addressed. Zero waste in the UC system is defined at 90% diversion rate of solid municipal waste. UCI is currently at 82% waste diversion.

Many back-of-house operations have reached zero waste through training employees to sort waste accurately, and having systems in place that conserve resources. The focus is now on engaging the flux of students that come on campus to be more mindful about food waste and transform the campus culture to influence new student cohorts.

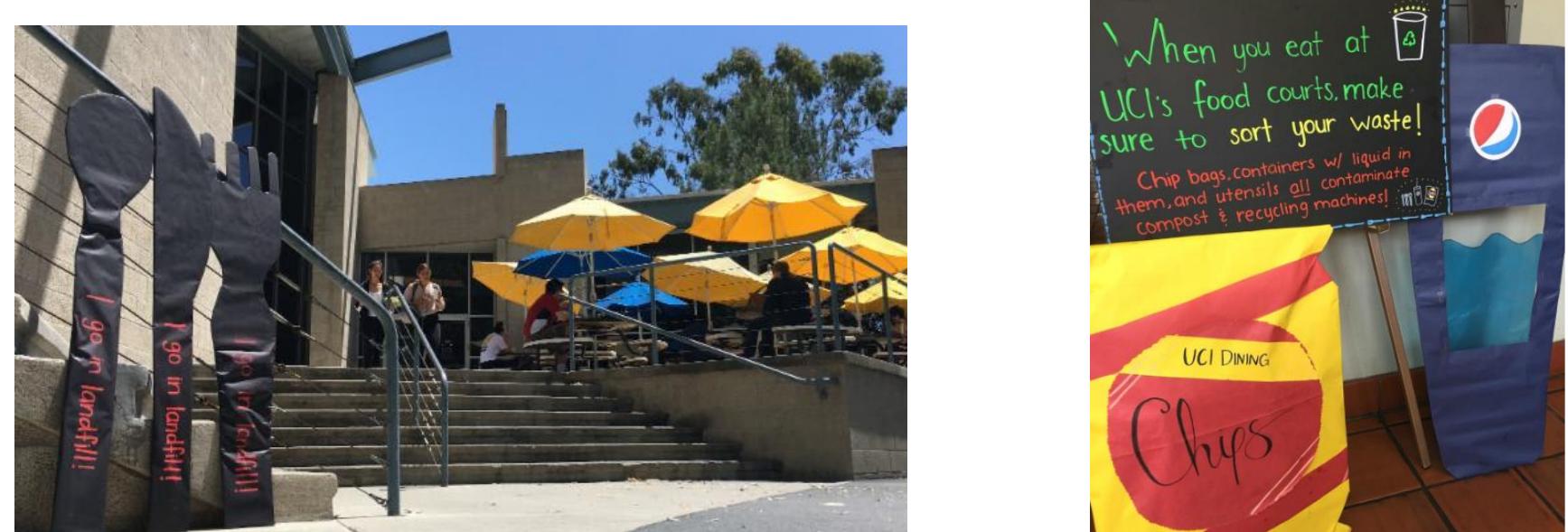
This Fellowship project is aimed at educating students to influence their behaviors regarding food waste at home, and when they eat out on campus.

UCI Dining

- Pepsi Co. Grant:** A grant of \$10,000 was composed and received. The funds will go towards building two interactive 3-set waste bin systems that will weigh waste thrown into the bins and project the weight and correlated carbon footprint on a digital screen. Engineers for a Sustainable World, a student-run club, is currently working on constructing the bins through a collaboration.
- Wiping out Waste:** Done once a quarter at two dining halls, The Anteater and Pippin, we have students scrap their leftover food waste into big bins and educate them about small changes they can do. We weigh the bins at the end of the night and the weight per person is displayed in the dining halls for the quarter.



- Back-of-house waste audits:** In order to enforce the zero waste rule for employees of dining areas, waste audits in the back-of-house area were conducted, checking if employees were sorting their waste in the appropriate bins. A score is given to each location based on their sorting accuracy, along with notes for improvement.
- Displays:** Large cardboard displays of chip bags, utensils, and soda cups were constructed to act as a visual to educate students on special items that belong in landfill.



- Food court waste audits:** Waste audits at the bins in the food courts were also conducted to understand what students are throwing away, and what items to focus on reducing or educating students about.
- Boothing:** Boothing and “Trash Talking” throughout the year was done in the dining halls, Sustainable Foods Fair, Sustainability Fair, Earth Week, and along Ring Road to educate and promote zero waste among students.



UCI Housing

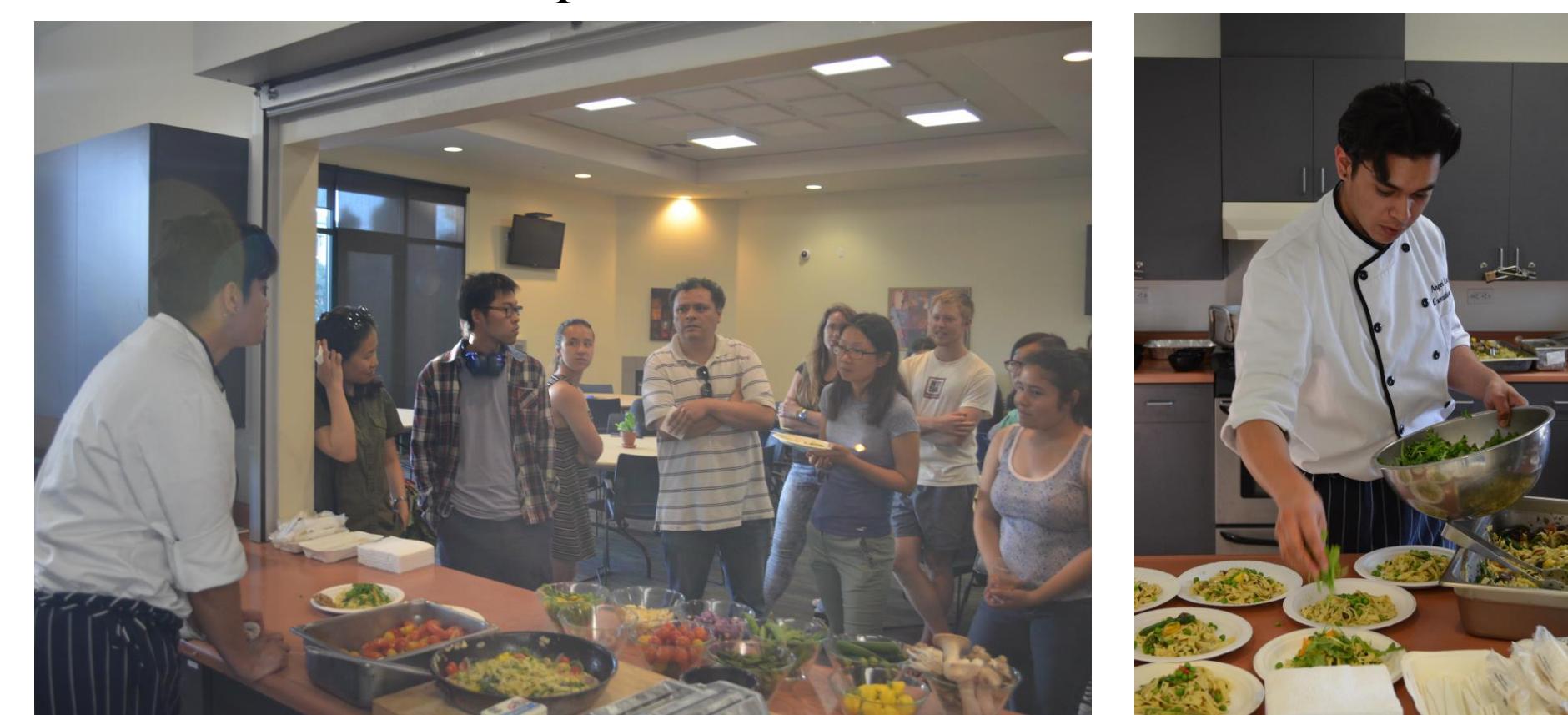
- Sustainability Cookbook:** A College Sustainability Cookbook was written and designed to help students understand how to cook while integrating sustainable topics such as purchasing sustainably and food waste. The purpose was to decrease the amount of food that spoils in kitchens and decrease dependence on single-packaged meals that contribute a majority of landfill waste as seen in waste audits. A TGIF grant was approved to print 6000 copies to distribute in Fall of 2017.



- Cookbook videos:** Three 90-sec tasty-style videos were filmed featuring three recipes from the cookbook to promote the launch of the cookbook.
- Cooking Programs:** Students at the Arroyo Vista Houses learned how to cook recipes from the cookbook to give them confidence in their cooking skills and demonstrate the simplicity of cooking with minimal waste.



- RA Socials:** A series socials to target the RAs allowed us to reach out to some of the most influential students and educate them about sustainability and food in hopes of them passing on the knowledge to their residents.
- Taste the Season:** A yearly cooking demo event for graduate students included Chef Angel, who taught attendees how to make homemade primavera pasta using fresh seasonal ingredients. Booths featuring sustainable food action on campus were present to educate attendees about efforts on campus.



- General Boothing:** Booths included a giant display of a waste audits done in housing communities, Fair trade, Food Fellows, the Global Sustainability Resource Center, and Zero Waste programs to further educate students in housing.



Results and Outcomes

Waste audits have shown that individually packaged to-go meals and single-use utensils are contributing a large portion of waste that goes to landfill. Currently at the retail locations, most items that are thrown away still belong in landfill. Accuracy of sorting among students also needs to be improved.



To address these issues, the cookbook promotes students to be more mindful about the food they purchase, whether it be the amount of packaging it has, or if the food itself is sustainable. With 6000 printed copies and an available online PDF, the cookbook will have a wide reach all throughout campus.



Conclusions

Through various outreach events and activities in multiple departments, UCI was able to reach a large population, from freshmen to graduate students. It is important to address food waste, both at the homes of students, where they can continue their habits off-campus, and in the dining areas that provide more waste sorting options.

More work can be done to increase the use of compostable plates and containers in retail areas as opposed to plastic containers, that will go to landfill. In order for this shift to be effective, students also need to be educated about composting and the importance of zero waste.

Future Goals

- Distribute all 6000 copies of the Sustainability Cookbook to students.
- Collect survey data from the cookbook to understand student knowledge about sustainability and food.
- Focus on cooking demos in a variety of themed houses to outreach to a wide variety of students.
- Increase efficiency and frequency of waste audits
- Increase effectiveness and frequency of educational boozing and outreach to a wider audience.

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