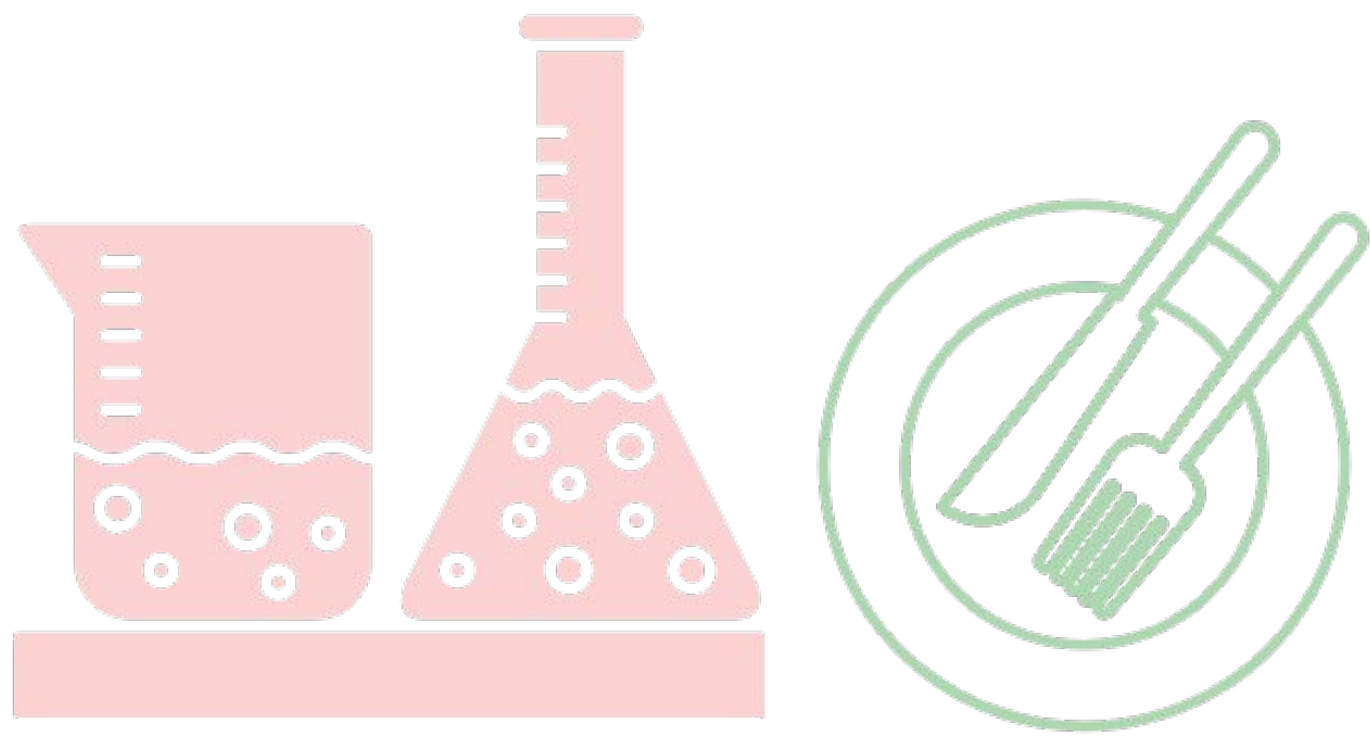


Food Science at UCLA

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Introduction

Food Science (according to the institute of food & technology): the study of the physical, biological, and chemical makeup of food; the causes of food deterioration; and the concepts underlying food processing.



As the necessity to combat climate change intensifies, the urgency for a more sustainable food system increases exponentially. Between food waste, land use, factory production, and meat consumption, there are endless ways to improve the ways we currently approach food through food science.

Unfortunately, UCLA does not currently offer food science as a major. While our food studies minor and its courses look at important aspects of food such as its social implications and cultural history, we have few opportunities to explore the chemical and biological aspects of food.

Project Goals

This project explored the current opportunities to study food science at UCLA and researched how to expand food science opportunities on campus, specifically with a food science major in mind.

Materials and Methods

Phase 1: Gauging Student Interest

In Phase 1 of my project, I created surveys and distributed them to UCLA students involved in food studies. The first interest group consisted of freshmen enrolled in Cluster M1: "Food: A Lens for Environment and Sustainability." I thought this class would be a good sample, as the curriculum is a comprehensive and introductory approach to food studies and food's relevance to climate change. This course is what first piqued my interest in food science during my freshman year. In addition to the freshman cluster, I also sent the survey to all students with a food studies minor. By sending it to students in the minor program, I was able to gauge the interest of older students and students who have had time to learn more about food studies in upper division courses.

Materials and Methods Continued

The surveys for these two interest groups were nearly identical, both including the following questions:

- Name
- University ID
- What category does your major best fit in?
- If Food Science were offered at UCLA, would you want to major in it?
- Regardless of if you would major in it, do you think Food Science would be a distinct and beneficial major at UCLA?
- Is there anything you would like to add about the possibility of UCLA offering a Food Science major?

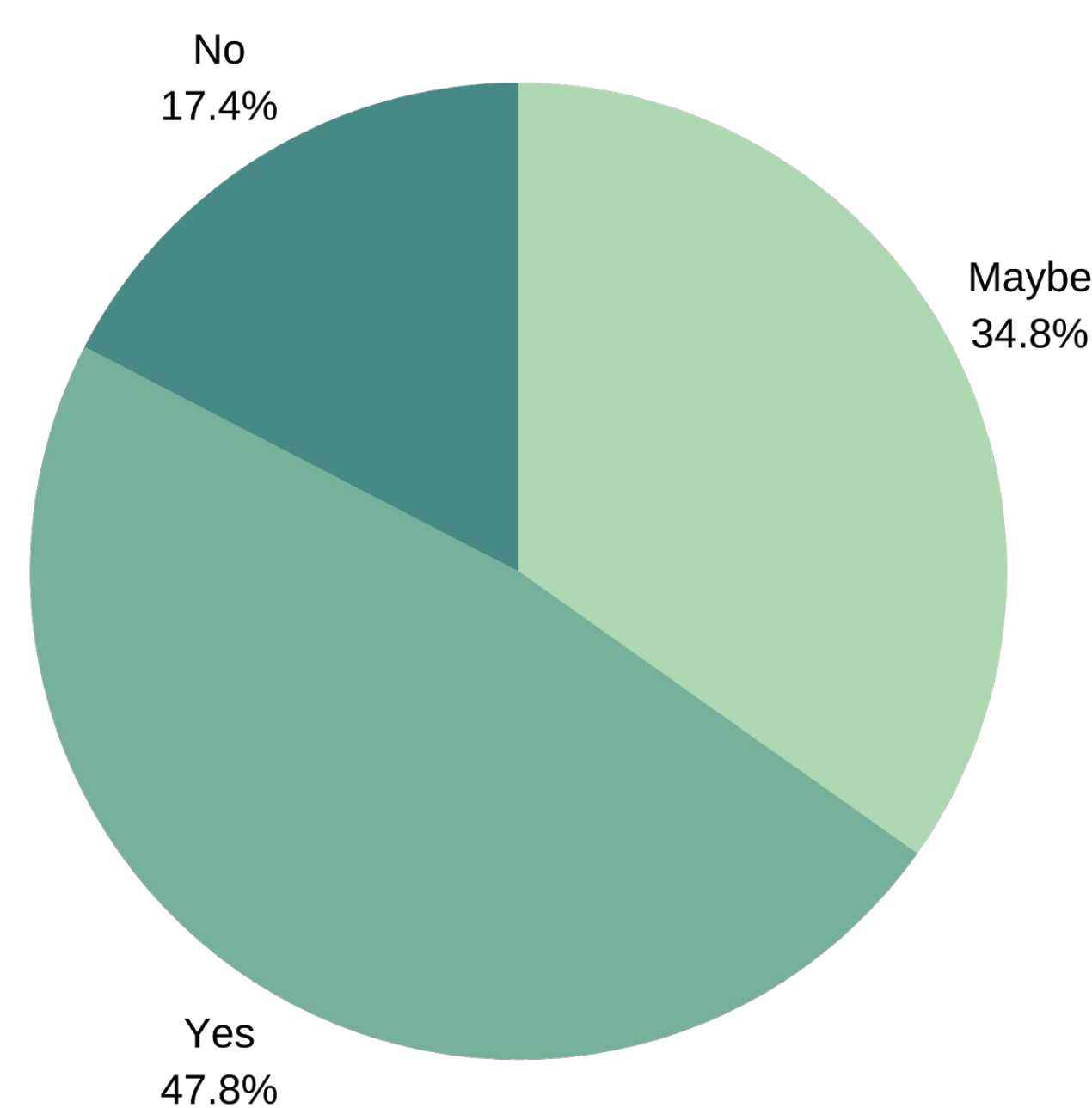
Phase 2: Interviewing Faculty

In Phase 2 of my project, I met with Professor Amy Rowat from the Integrative Biology and Physiology department at UCLA. As a food scientist herself, Dr. Rowat was able to offer insight about the future of food science and the potential for and limitations of a food science major at UCLA.

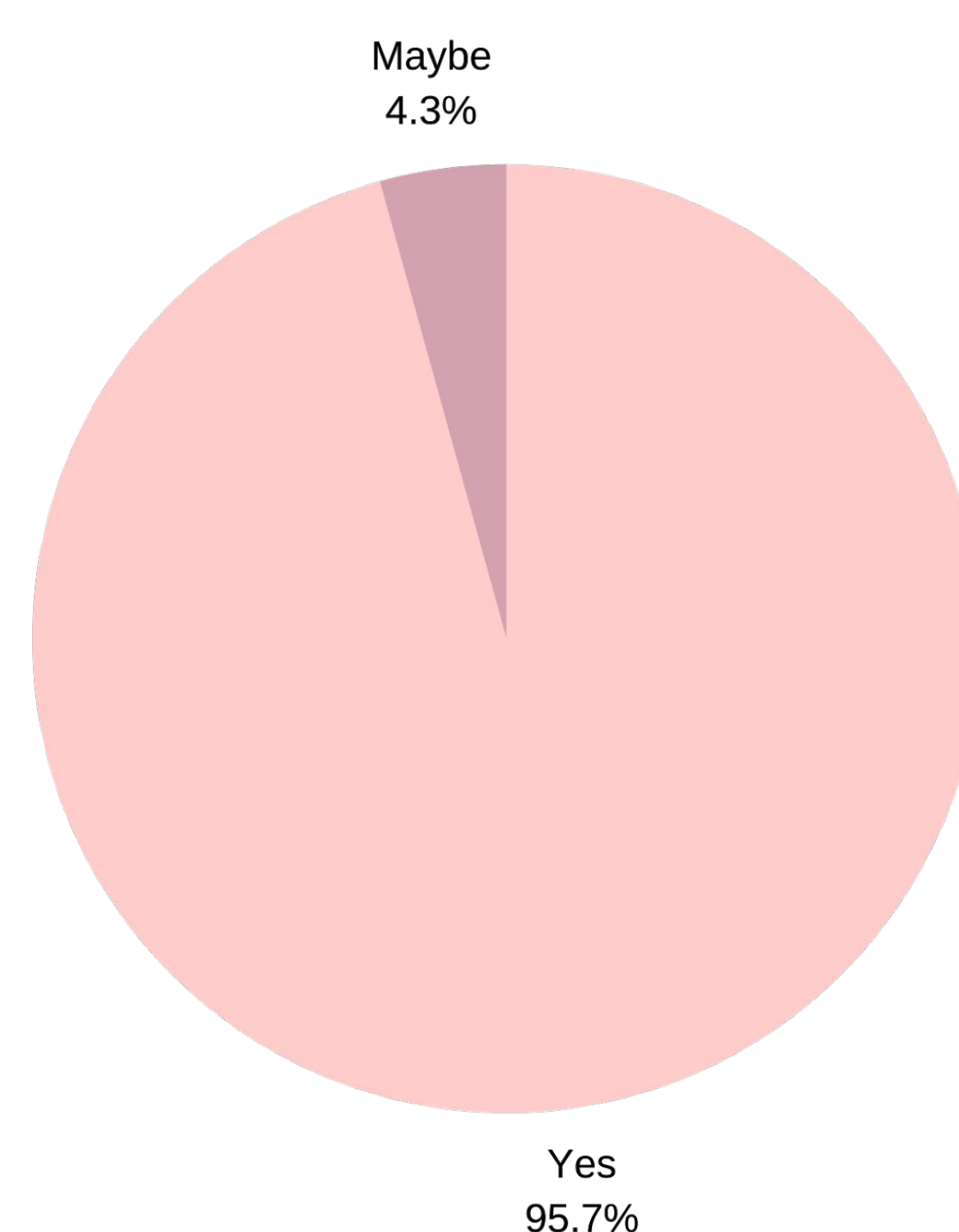
Results and Outcomes

The surveys yielded the following results:

If Food Science were offered at UCLA, would you want to major in it?



Regardless of if you would major in it, do you think Food Science would be a distinct and beneficial major at UCLA?



Conclusions

After Phase 1, the demand for a food science major at UCLA seemed high. Based on student responses, many students are interested in food science or at least believe it would be a beneficial major to UCLA. However, after interviewing Dr. Amy Rowat and hearing her perspective as a food scientist and professor at UCLA, it was clear why no such major exists and why creating one would prove to be difficult. While institutions such as UC Davis and California Polytechnic State University have great food science programs, these programs would be nothing without their qualified faculty. Food science is a niche field with specific requirements. With such specific requirements, the major could not simply be a branch off of pre-existing majors. Introducing food science to UCLA would require new classes, with food science-specific curriculum, and thus, food science-specific faculty. Recruiting such faculty and building an entirely new program would require a lot of faith and momentum from UCLA that it currently does not possess.

Although there is no clear sign of a food science major anytime soon, Dr. Rowat did mention opportunities, already at UCLA, to learn about food science:

- Scienceandfood at UCLA
 - An organization composed of faculty, undergraduates, and graduate students whose mission is "promoting knowledge of science through food, and food through science." The group has projects such as designing science curricula that focuses on farming and food for a nearby high school, John R. Wooden high school.
- PHYSCI 7
 - This course, titled "Science and Food: Physical and Molecular Origins of What We Eat" is one of few, if not the only, food science courses at UCLA. It is taught by Professor Amy Rowat, who often brings in guest lecturers from various fields within food and cooking.

Future Goals

Going forward, I hope to contact food scientists at institutions with food science programs such as UC Davis and California Polytechnic State University, inquiring about the structures of their programs and how they came to be.

While UCLA may not yet see the urgency of providing a food science major, this field will only become more relevant and necessary as the fight against climate change increases.

UCLA, as premier research institution, has the potential to rapidly advance the field of food science via a future major and its brilliant faculty and students.

Acknowledgements

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