



Bobcat Pantry: Combating Food Insecurity among UC Merced Students

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Mission Statement

UC Merced believes that students should not go hungry. The Bobcat Pantry provides access to nutritious and healthy food for all graduate and undergraduate students. We promote sustainable practices and a holistic approach to a healthy and nutrition conscious lifestyle. Student involvement and leadership provides the basis for the pantry operations and services.

Background

- 61% of undergraduate students were determined to be food insecure according to the University of California Undergraduate education survey ¹
- 21% of graduate students were determined to be food insecure ²
- The Merced county X3 Report found the city of Merced to be a food dessert and food swamp ³
- UC Merced itself is a food dessert with no grocery store at walking distance
- The Bobcat Pantry was launched on August 30th of 2018

Sustainability Efforts

- Take a Bag Leave a Bag
- Bulk Dispensers
- Shop locally (Fresno Food Commons)
- Reduce Food Waste
 - Wonky Veggies at no value
 - Shop at the Merced County Food Bank
 - Receive donations from Bobcat Eats Food Waste Program

Data for 2018- 2019 Academic Year

Unique Participants:

UC Merced had a total of 8,544 students (undergraduate and graduate) enrolled for the 2018-2019 academic year. A total of 2,500 unique participants visited the pantry between August 30, 2018 to May 16, 2019. This accounts for 29.26% of the total population.

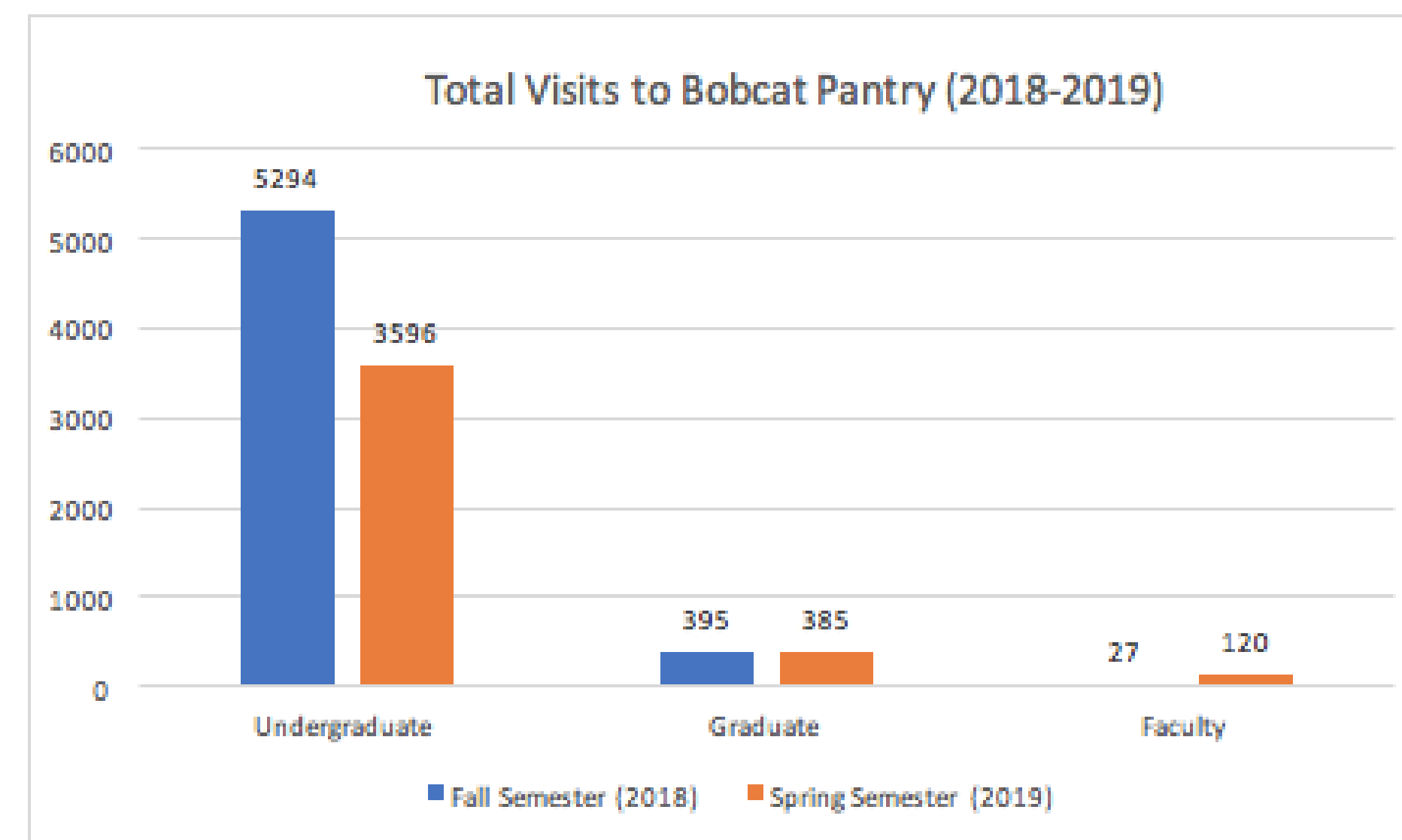


Figure 1. Total Pantry visits 2018-2019

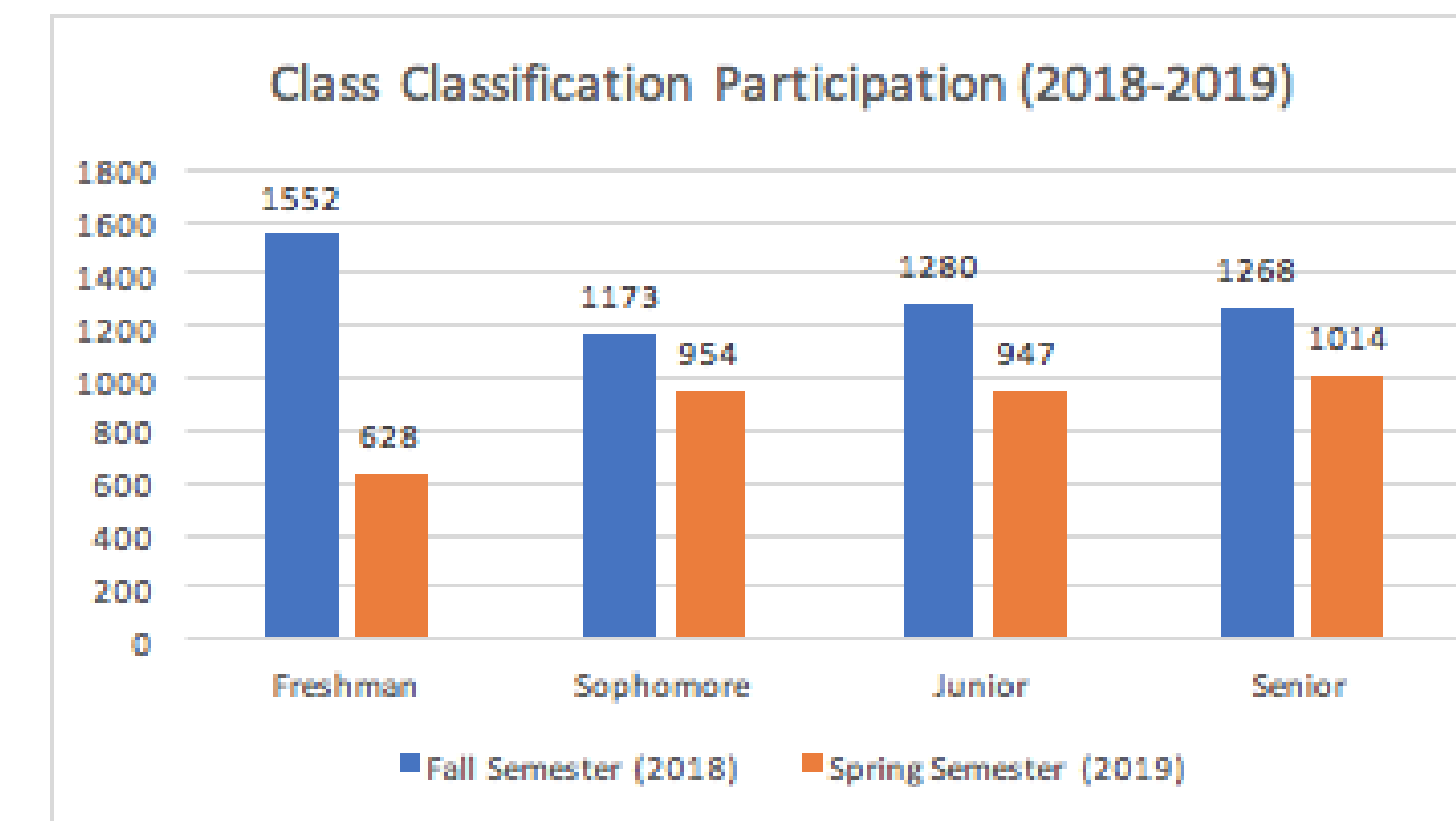


Figure 2. Class Participation 2018-2019.

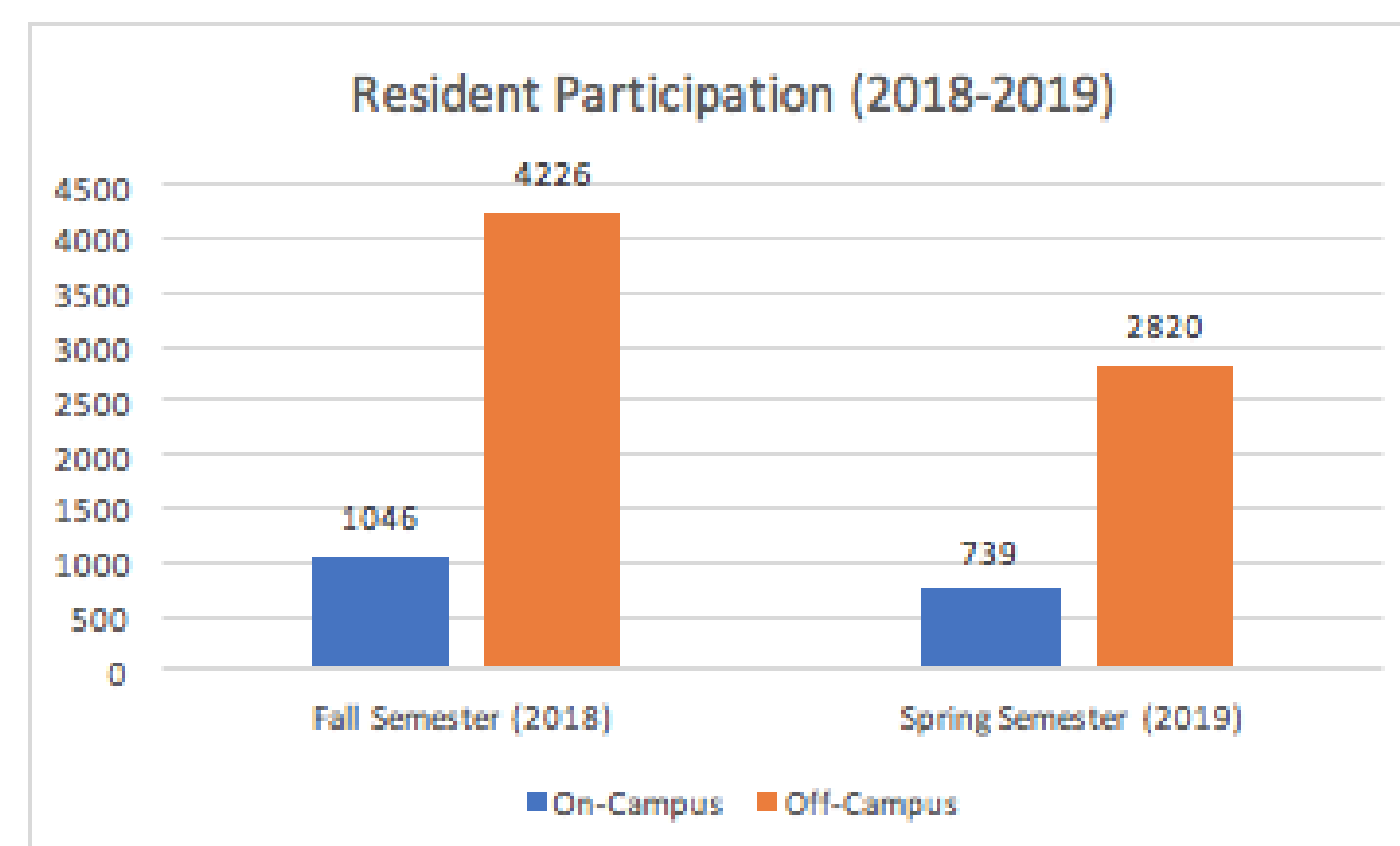


Figure 3. On-campus vs. Off-campus participation

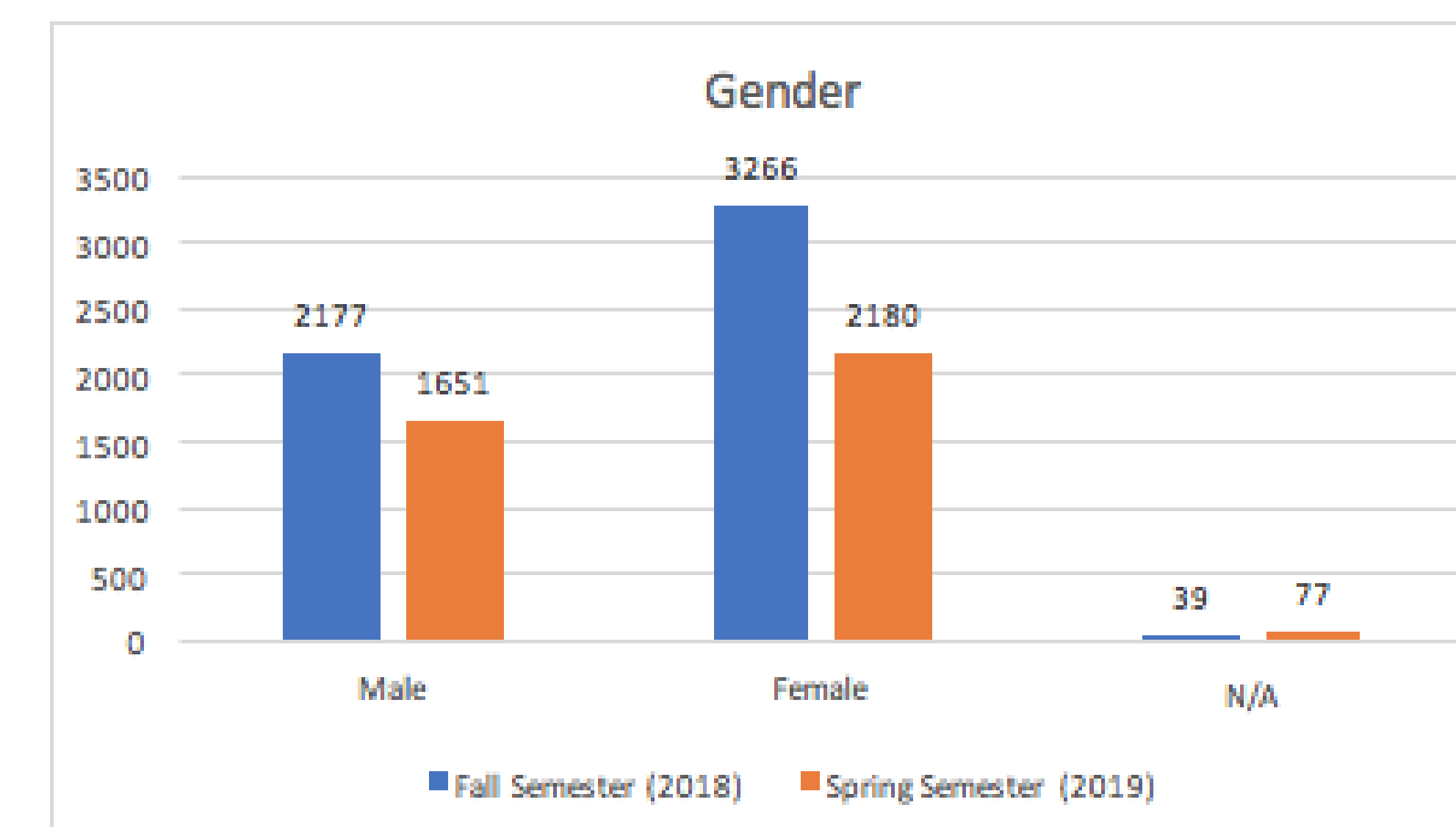


Figure 4. Total Visits by Gender

As shown in figure 1 and 2 there was a decrease in total visits between first and second semester. Various factors could have contributed this decrease. In addition marketing efforts campus wide were decreased second semester.

Campus Wide Collaboration

The Bobcat Pantry has opened additional collaboration opportunities campus-wide. A few examples are listed below:

- Bobcat Eats Food Waste Awareness Program, which helps rescue food and redirects it from landfill to feeding individuals
- UC Merced Dining Commons: Recipes are created by the chefs at UC Merced to teach students on how they could utilize the items offered at the pantry. In addition the dining team coordinated a fundraiser for the pantry.
- Office of the Chancellor hosted a food drive in the month of December

Microfocus Group Research

Background:

Food insecurity among at-risk student categories is arguably more acute at UC Merced. Certain student groups are disproportionately affected, including first generation college students (56%), those who come from foster care (61%) or low-income families (55%), or identify as African-American (62%), Latino (57%), or LGBTQ+ (51%). This study is conducted to gather information on UC Merced students attitudes and experiences surrounding food security, factors affecting utilization of food security services on campus, and group-specific needs on the kind and form of food security resources at UC Merced.

Pre-liminary Results:

A total of 8 microfocus groups with 18 participants were conducted. Student leaders express to have witnessed food insecurity within their organization. Most consider the issue a priority and address it primarily through interpersonal support. Main perceived factors preventing access to nutrition are structural (i.e transportation, affordability, convenience, and culturally appropriate) and personal (i.e time, financial management, food prep, awareness of resources).

Protocols and Guidelines

All protocols and guidelines were created after visiting sister campuses, researching food pantry guidelines and complying with UC Merced Health department as well as Merced County Food Bank

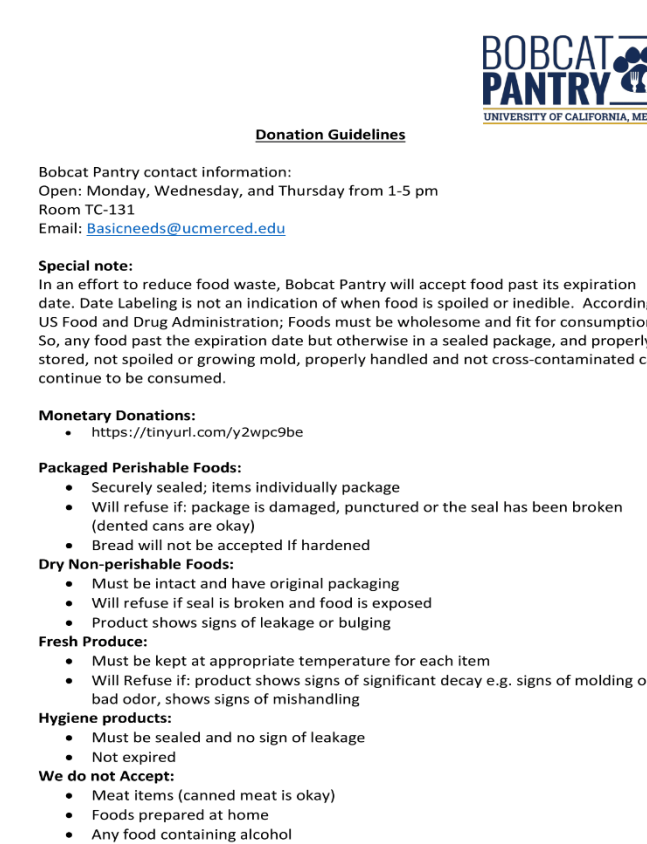


Figure 5. Donation Guidelines

Resource Flyers

- QR Codes are included to assist with sustainability
- Posted and distributed campus wide
- One central flyer for all resources



Figure 6. Resource Flyer



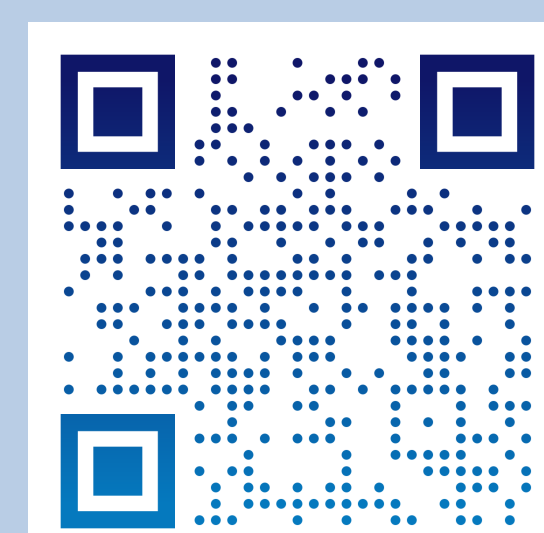
Figure 5. Bobcat Pantry Launch 8/30/2018

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References

1. University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES) Data Tables, 2018
2. Institutional Research and Decision Report, Contact Cinnamon Danube (Principal Analyst): Cdanube@ucmerced.edu
3. Merced County Department of Public Health. CX3: A Health Snapshot of Our Communities. Aug. 2010.

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