

# Food Citizens: A Consumer Education Campaign

Jack Greenberg

University of California Global Food Initiative Fellowship

## Introduction

Food is both a daily necessity and an integral part of an individual's role in our communities and society at large. Food is at the intersection of a multitude of social variables, including the economy, the environment, and the political sphere.

In America, 1 in 9 people lacked enough "access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" in 2018. (<https://tinyurl.com/v6rb2vac>) At the same time, 133 billion pounds of food gets wasted every year, equating to a 161 billion dollar (\$161,000,000,000) loss in the United States alone. (<https://tinyurl.com/ydz38hqb>) Such enormous socioeconomic imbalance signifies that radical solutions are needed at every level of the food distribution system. However, it can often be difficult and even daunting - due to sociocultural barriers - for individuals to identify areas where they contribute to this issue and to seek out solutions that will benefit the community as a whole.

What do we do with our food waste? How can we shop to support local food economies? What impacts do our daily choices have on the food system and the environment as a whole? How can we afford to feed ourselves and our families while taking environmental and social justice factors into account? What are possible solutions that we can take action on at an individual level? These questions can often be inconvenient, onerous, or downright intrusive to ask of many people who struggle with putting food on the table every day.

The mission statement for The Global Food Initiative states that the program "aligns the University of California's research, outreach and operations... in a sustained effort to develop, demonstrate and export solutions for food security, health and sustainability." (<https://tinyurl.com/y7vphlwr>) Through this process, the GFI has come to develop a program that focuses its efforts on answering some of these questions by promoting the concept of **Food Citizenship**.

**Food Citizenship** is defined as: "The practice of engaging in food-related behaviors that support, rather than threaten, the development of a democratic, socially and economically just, and environmentally sustainable food system." (Wilkins, 2004) Simply put, Food Citizenship focuses on the actionable aspects of people's everyday lives that can help bring about a more just and equitable world through the medium of food.

The GFI has employed the concept of Food Citizenship through the creation and implementation of a consumer education campaign that aims to educate and empower individuals through hands-on workshops and online posts that teach universal skills to community members.

## Project Goals

This project's aim is to:

- Create curriculum that engages participants
- Support cross-organizational collaboration
- Leave participants with actionable skills

Through these features, an individual will have the opportunity to learn how their actions can either foster or inhibit the health and wellbeing of their local food economy, how to differentiate between such actions and how to use one's personal autonomy to promote the values and skills that they develop.

In addition, the UC system has access to the end results and data in order to:

- Understand the level of interest surrounding topics addressed
- Learn what methods of outreach were successful
- Promote supplementary school resources with participants

## Materials and Methods

Before creating curriculum for workshops and subsequent online posts, it was important to research what other organizations were doing, what practical knowledge could be organized for dissemination, and which community organizations would be willing and able to partner with the GFI. Once the necessary information was accumulated, the possible workshop series was presented and explained to various community partners, including the UCSB Food Nutrition and Basic Skills program, in order to attain funding.

Once the series was solidified, scheduled, and funded, outreach was conducted through various online platforms including school web pages, community newspapers and social media sites, as well as via in person promotion, in-class promotion and physical flyers. Multiple classes opted to offer the workshop series as either extra credit or supplementary credit for their respective course.

The 5 Winter workshops included: How To Home Compost, Edible Insects And The Future Of Future, Consumer Empowerment, How To Make Food Last, and Eco Iron Chef.



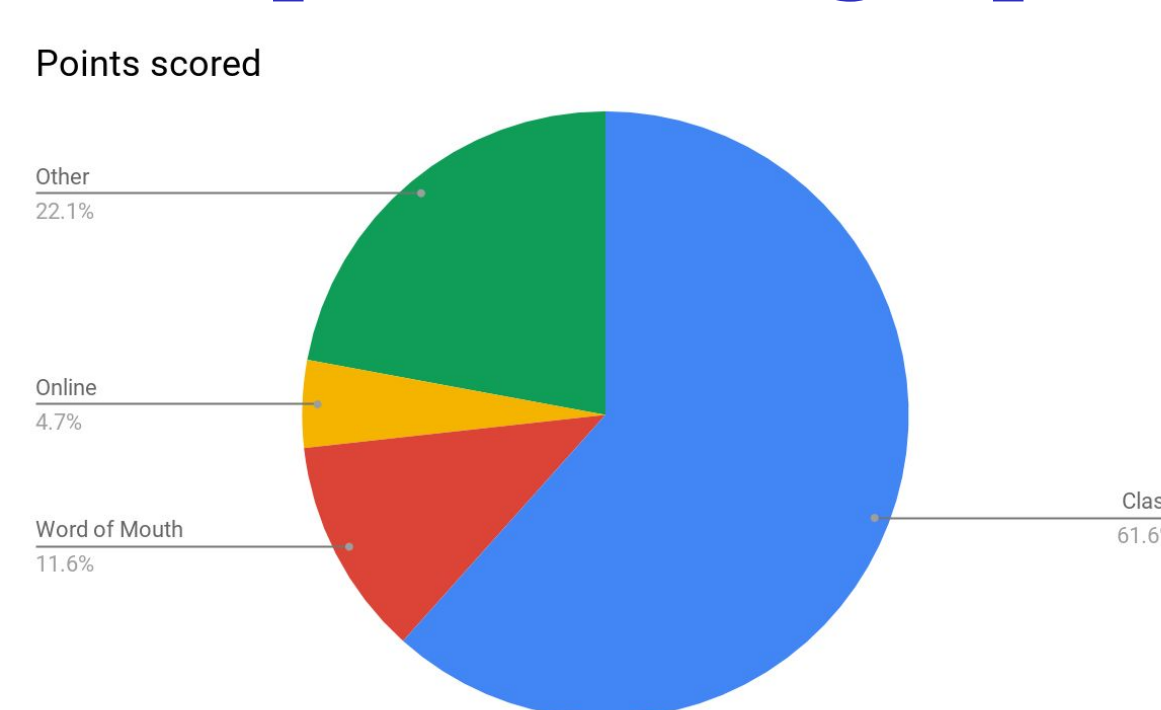
## Quantitative Results

A total of 86 people attended the 5 winter workshops, with an average of 17 people per workshop. Of these attendees, 69 were students and 17 were community members.

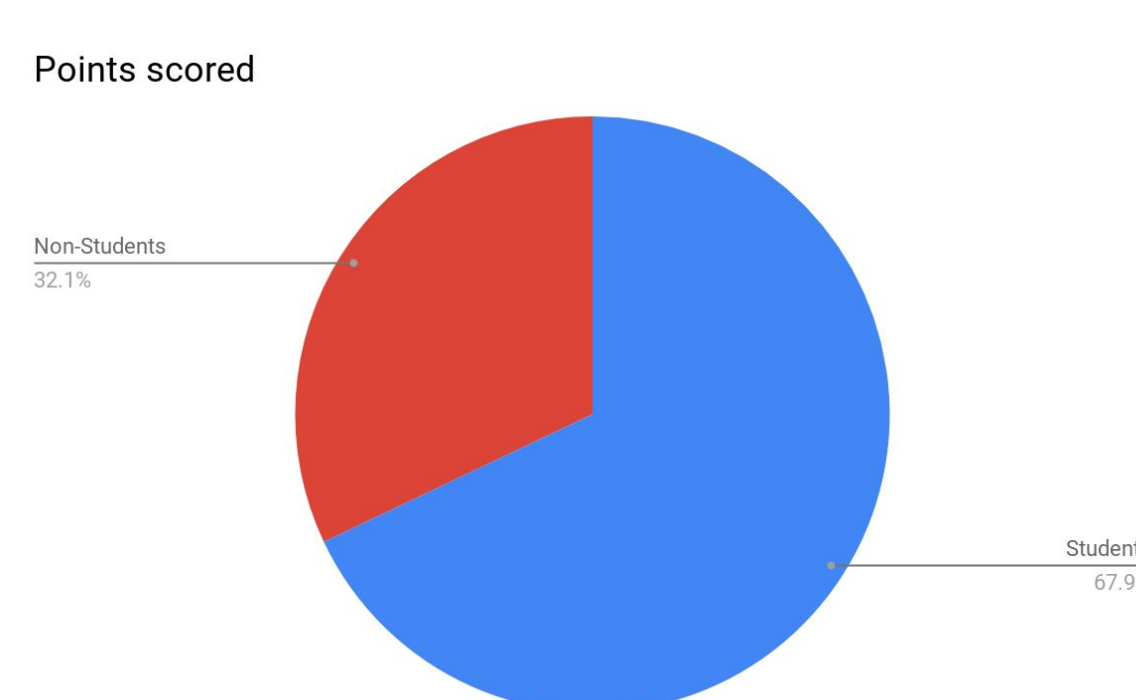
53 students reported taking part in the workshop series because they were receiving some form of class credit, which highlights the positive effect that connecting with academic instructors had in facilitating participation.

Because of COVID-19, efforts were shifted towards online promotion of information, where there have been a total of 16 blog posts created, as well as 1 video series. All future content will be available at [foodcitizensucsb.edu](http://foodcitizensucsb.edu).

## Participant Demographics



"How Did You Hear About Us?"



Student vs. Non-Student Attendees

## Qualitative Analysis

Over the course of the academic year, extensive research, community input and deliberation was employed to develop an entire set of lesson plans on the topic of Food Citizenship. This topic had not been addressed in its entirety at a school or community wide level as of 2019. Lesson plans were developed with the specific intention of making them easily accessible, transferrable, and digestible for other campus-based groups to employ. Similarly, these lesson plans are available to other UC, college, or community based organizations for proliferation.

The workshop series was developed after the lesson plan had been fully created, with the series acting as a means to actively engage the topics discussed in the lesson plans. Every workshop included at least one element of hands-on, experiential learning so that those participating could increase engagement, immediately apply knowledge gained, and feel an active sense of accomplishment.

Due to COVID-19, all learning material was transferred to an online platform. While this limited the ability for experiential learning, it created a new opportunity to engage people in a wider range of areas, at a high volume of participation, and at any time of the day. This project acts as a living resource that will be available to all with access to the internet.



GFI Food Citizenship Workshop Participants

## Future Goals

With an eye towards the future, The GFI has submitted a grant proposal to The Green Initiative Fund at UCSB in order to carry on the existing program and to expand its range. The proposal includes an initial Fall 2020 workshop series that engages participants in a similar fashion to what has been established this year. In Winter 2021, there will be a Food Waste Challenge that will track individual's food waste in hopes of creating quantitative and qualitative data on how to best promote the reduction of food waste at home. In Spring 2021, participants in the Food Waste Challenge will have the opportunity to create their own funded projects that focus on how to engage the community on the topic of Food Citizenship.

This consumer education program has created a structure for how to address food citizenship at the individual level. This program has offered an opportunity for people to look for ways to engage topics of food waste, security, sovereignty, and citizenship on a personal level. Individual action has the ability permeate into the communal and global scales of our food system. Together, we each hold the power to learn and implement environmental, social, and economic practices that will have a lasting effect on all of Earth's inhabitants.

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