FRESH Basic Needs Hub's Food Recovery Notification System: Zot Bites

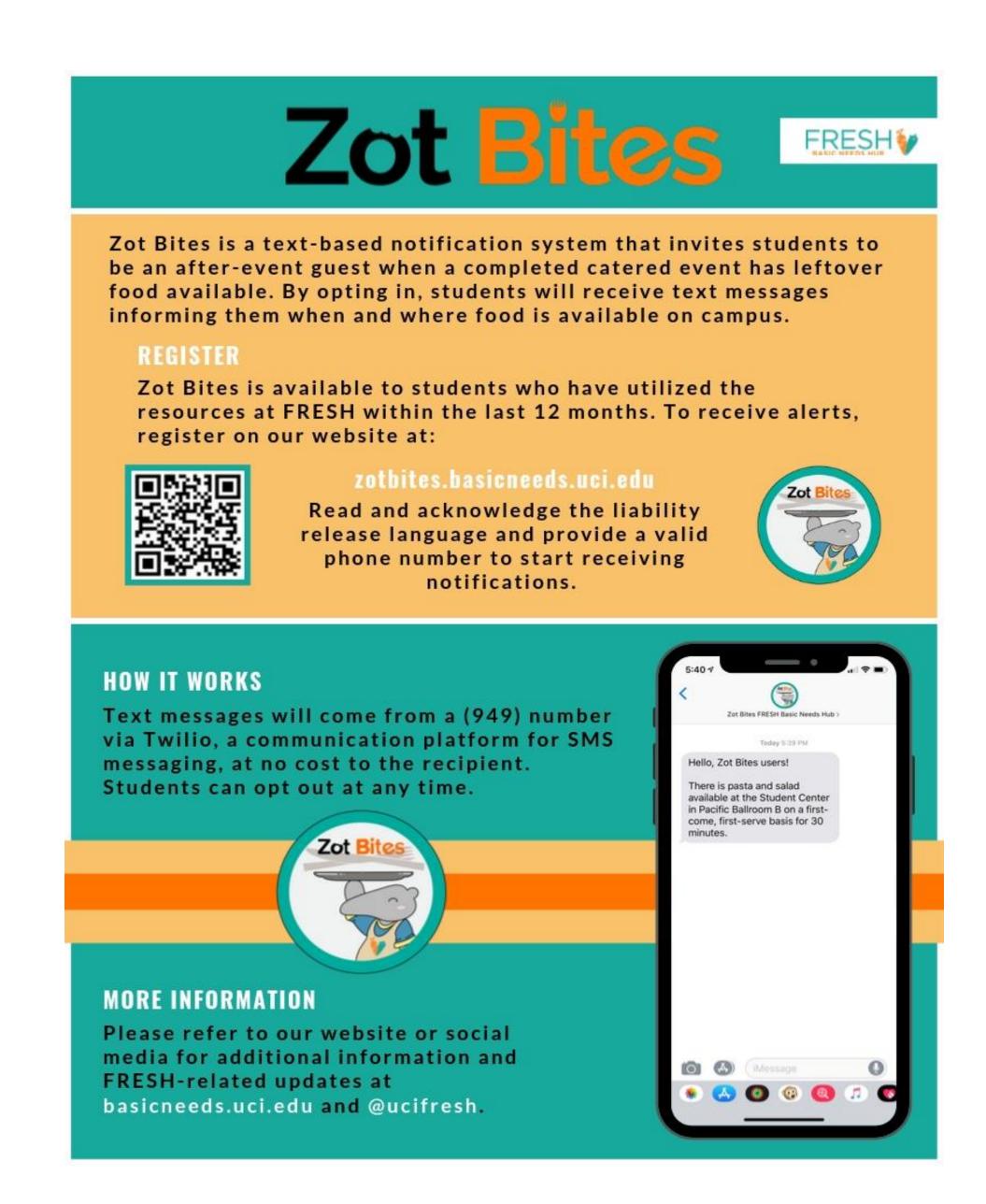## Joann Lozano
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Introduction

Zot Bites is a text-based notification system that invites students to be an after-event guest when a catered event is over and food is available. By opting in, students will receive text messages informing them when and where food is available on campus.

UCI creates an average of 10,000 tons of solid waste annually. As a UC-best practiced program, Zot Bites not only works to increase food security among college students, it also accomplishes Zero Waste UCI goals of decreasing on-campus food waste. Zot Bites was modeled from and inspired by Similar programs including UC Santa Barbara's Late Guest and CSU Fullerton's Titan Bites.

Zot Bites has been 2-years in the making through the passion and tireless efforts of multiple generations of Global Food Initiative Food Recovery fellows

Project Goals

This project aimes to address the rising number of students experiencing food insecurity and to reduce food waste from catered on-campus events.

- Eliminate food waste on campus
- Promote a more sustainable way of disposing of leftover or "unwanted food"
- Destigmatizing Food Insecurity

Zot Bites will be used to serve an estimated 4,500 UCI Students to address the issue of food insecurity on campus. By making catered food that would otherwise go to waste available for students, we are building a more food secure campus

Materials and Methods

Zot Bites currently serves as a supplemental resource for UCI students experiencing food insecurity. Meaning that Zot Bites is only accessible to students who have accessed the FRESH Basic Needs Hub within the last 12 months. Therefore in order to subscribe, users must visit register through The FRESH Hub to have access to register to Zot bites. Students must register through our website: zotbites.basicneeds.uci.edu. It will then direct them to an introductory message, which explains that the food will be available for a 30-minute window for a first come first serve basis, so students know that receiving a text message does not guarantee that they will receive food. The bottom half of the page covers the liability waiver. When the student certifies that they have read and understood the contents of the waiver, then they can create a profile where they upload their student information and phone numbers. Text messages will come from a (949) number via Twillio, a communication platform for SMS messaging, at no cost to the recipient. Students can opt-out at any time.

Conclusions

While this project is off to a good start, further research is needed to find out how much food is saved from becoming wasted and contribute to the Zero Waste UCI goals of decreasing on-campus food waste.

Eventually, we do envision making this program available to the entire campus as we build more partnerships and solidify our impact in the community. Although with COVID-19 pandemic, plans and development for the Zot Bites Program have been postponed until next fall quarter.

Results and Outcomes

Zot Bites aims to address the rising number of students experiencing food insecurity and to reduce food waste from catered on-campus events. According to the UC Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES) administered in 2016, approximately 45% of the undergraduate students and 25% of graduate students are food insecure at UCI. With a percentage of this magnitude, we aspire to serve this population through the implementation of Zot Bites. While the Fresh Hub is limited by its hours of operation between 10 am-5pm, Zot Bites creates an opportunity to provide meals to students using recovered food from catered events after 5pm. The project officially launched winter 2020. As of May 2020, the program has 804 students registered.

Future Goals

Ideally, we would like to move to phase 2 of the recovery project and aim for UCI food surplus through recovering catered food from UCI dining to distribute to students via the pantry. As well as receive surplus catered food from Waste Not OC networks to increase accessibility for students who may not have had the opportunity to be an after event guest while on campus.

Acknowledgements