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# Sustainability in To-Go Dining at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Maya Tanikawa-Brown & Chloe Hoover

## Introduction

We are interested in finding practical solutions for reducing food waste and improving student perceptions of food sustainability at UNL.

To achieve this goal, we collected data from 206 participants through an undergraduate student survey, focused on students with a meal plan who eat at Selleck Food Court. Our literature review, conversations with UNL Dining and sustainability groups on campus inspired our solutions.

## Literature Review

When programming such as physical displays, posters, and voluntary waste monitors were in dining centers, food waste was reduced by 28% (Alattar & Morse, 2021).

When using to-go dining options, consumers grew to expect the portions of their meals (Mann, et al., 2021).

Universities that used personal reusable dishware were most successful in diverting food waste (Filho et al., 2021).

## Student Survey

1. Demographic information: class, college, sustainable practices pre-UNL
2. Current sustainable practices at Selleck food court
3. Actionable participation to improve behavior
4. Opportunity for qualitative interaction

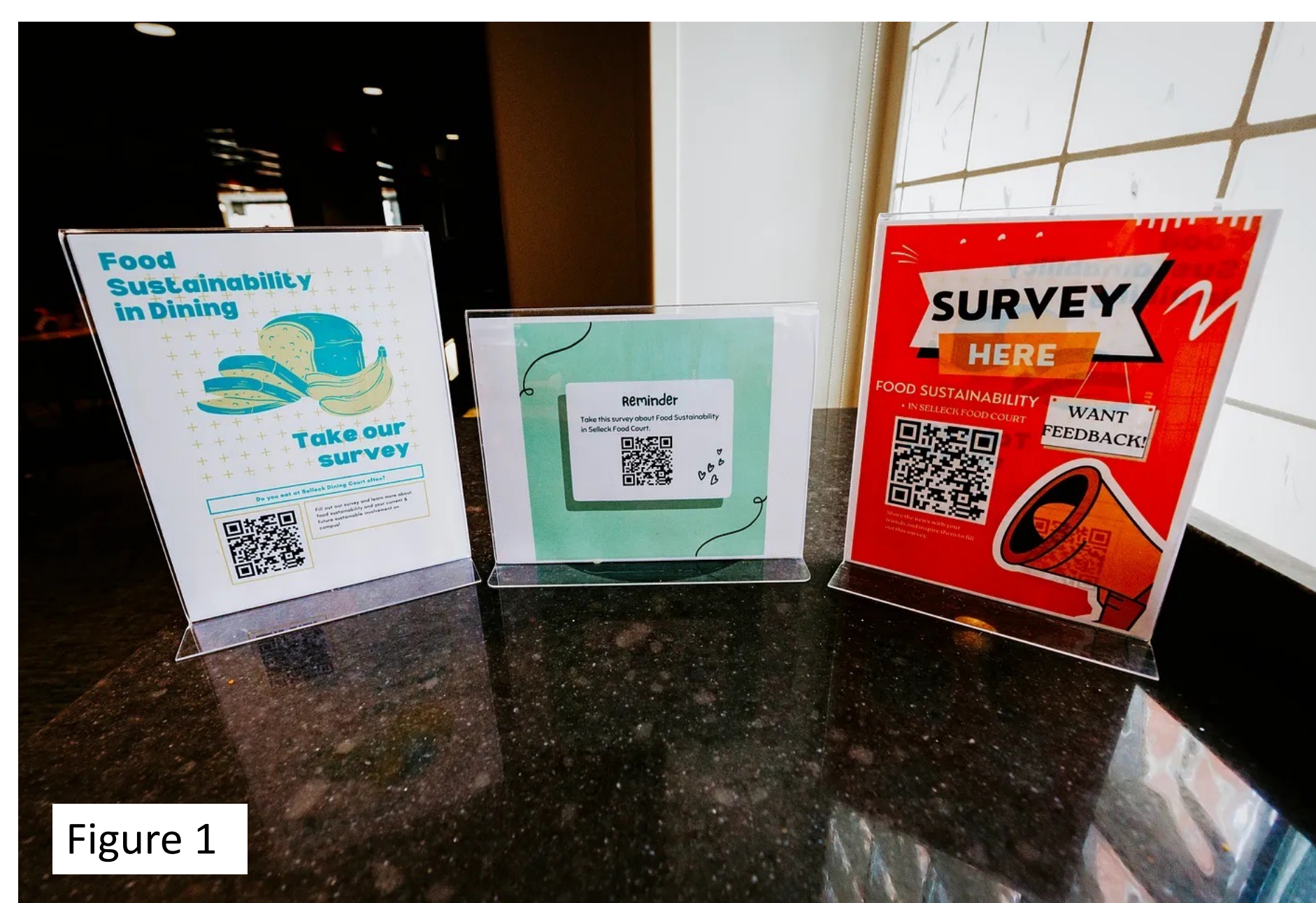
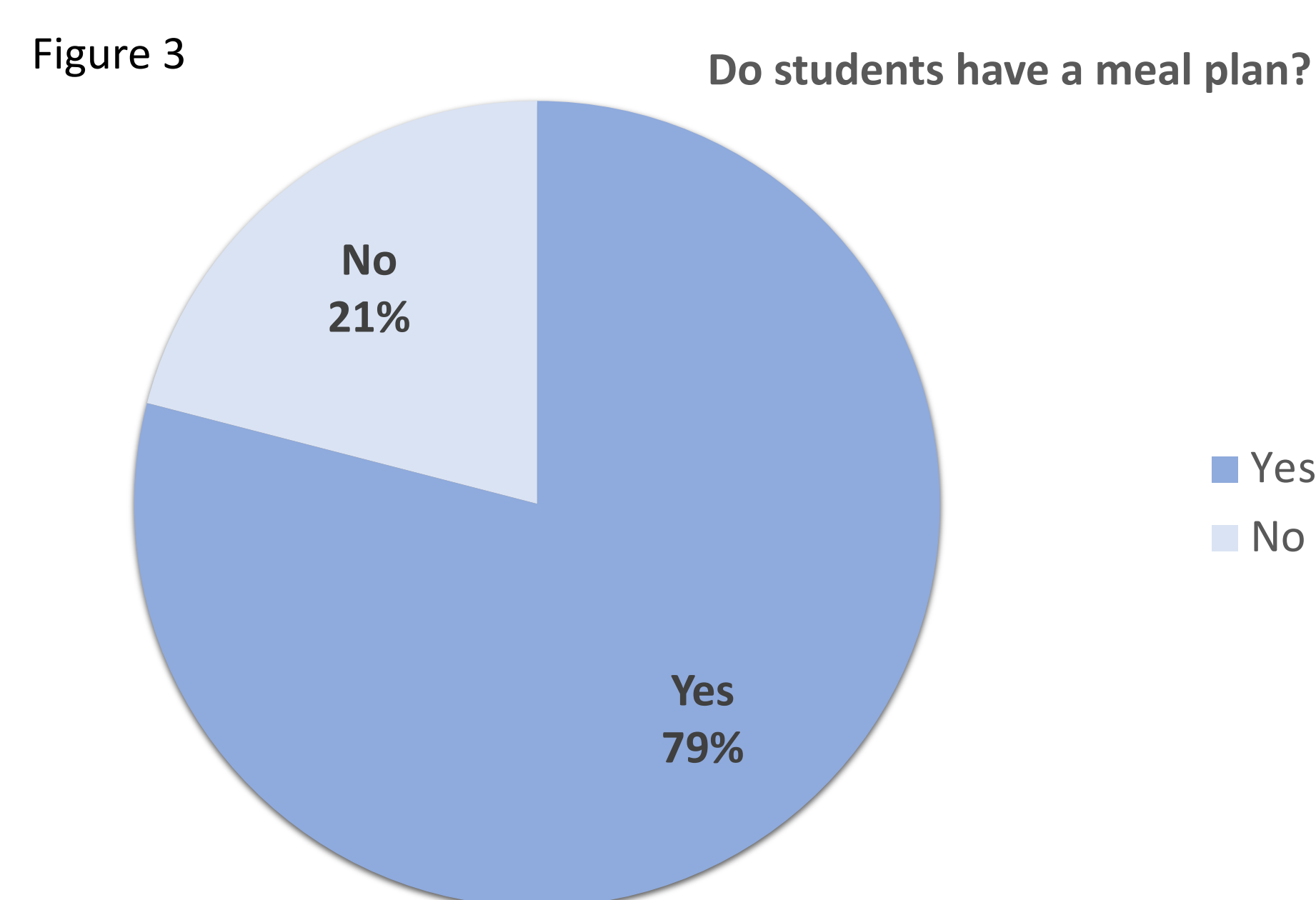
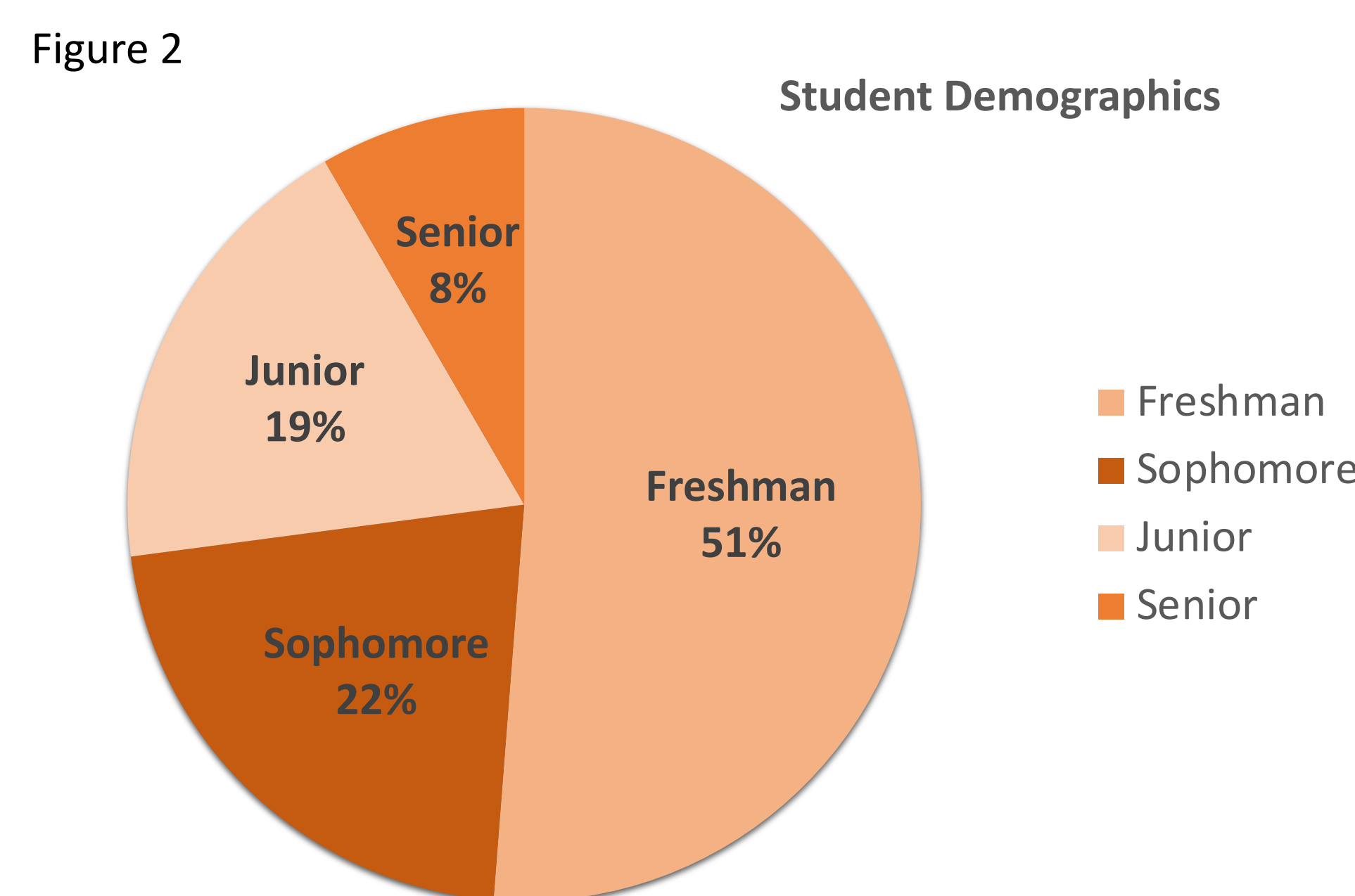


Figure 1

## Data Analysis

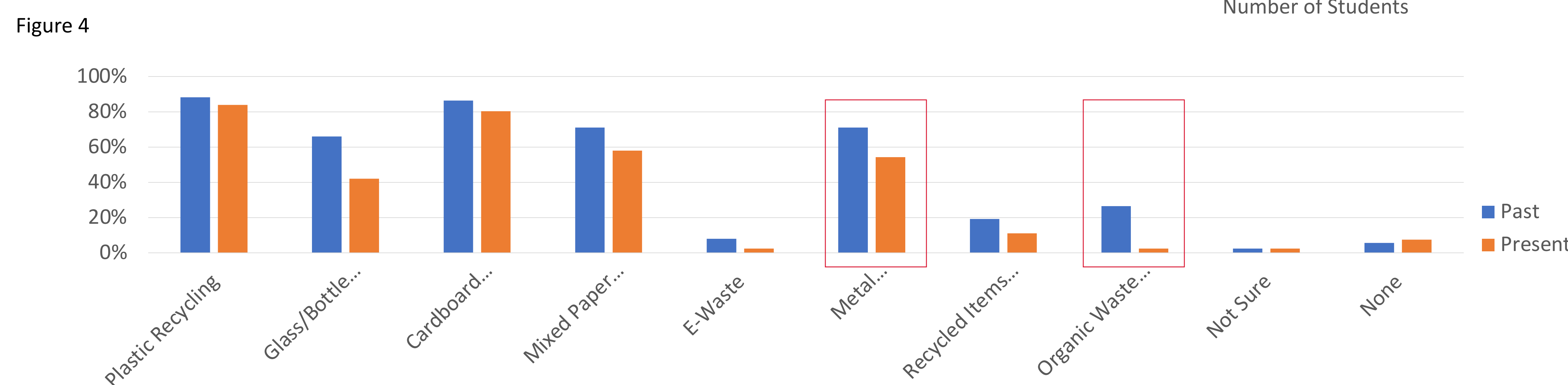
### Demographics of Student Responses:

- We advertised in a variety of student departmental and college newsletters, in the residence halls, in physical campus buildings, and in Selleck Food Court (Figure 1), in an attempt to obtain representative student participation (Figure 2 & 3).



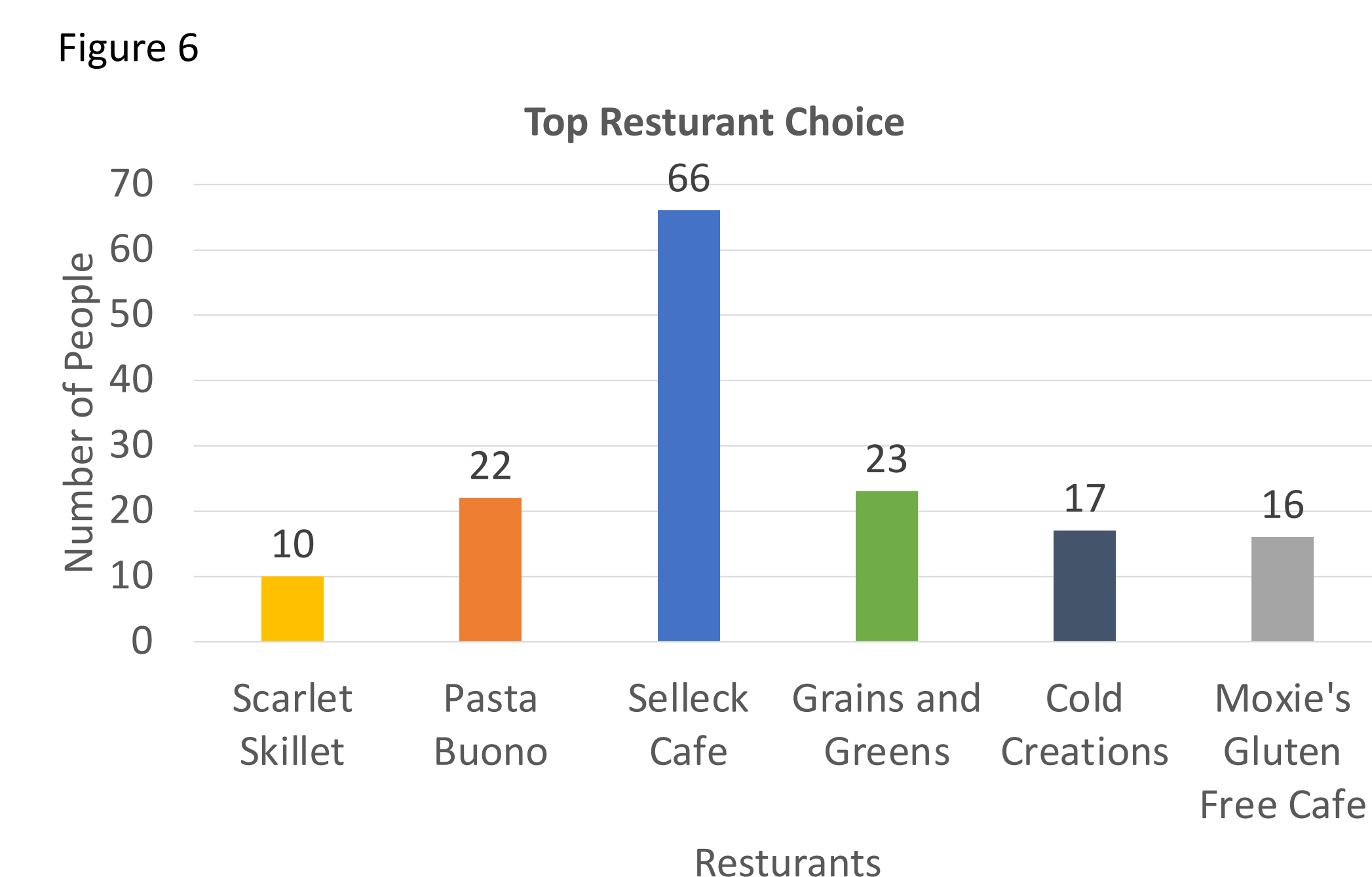
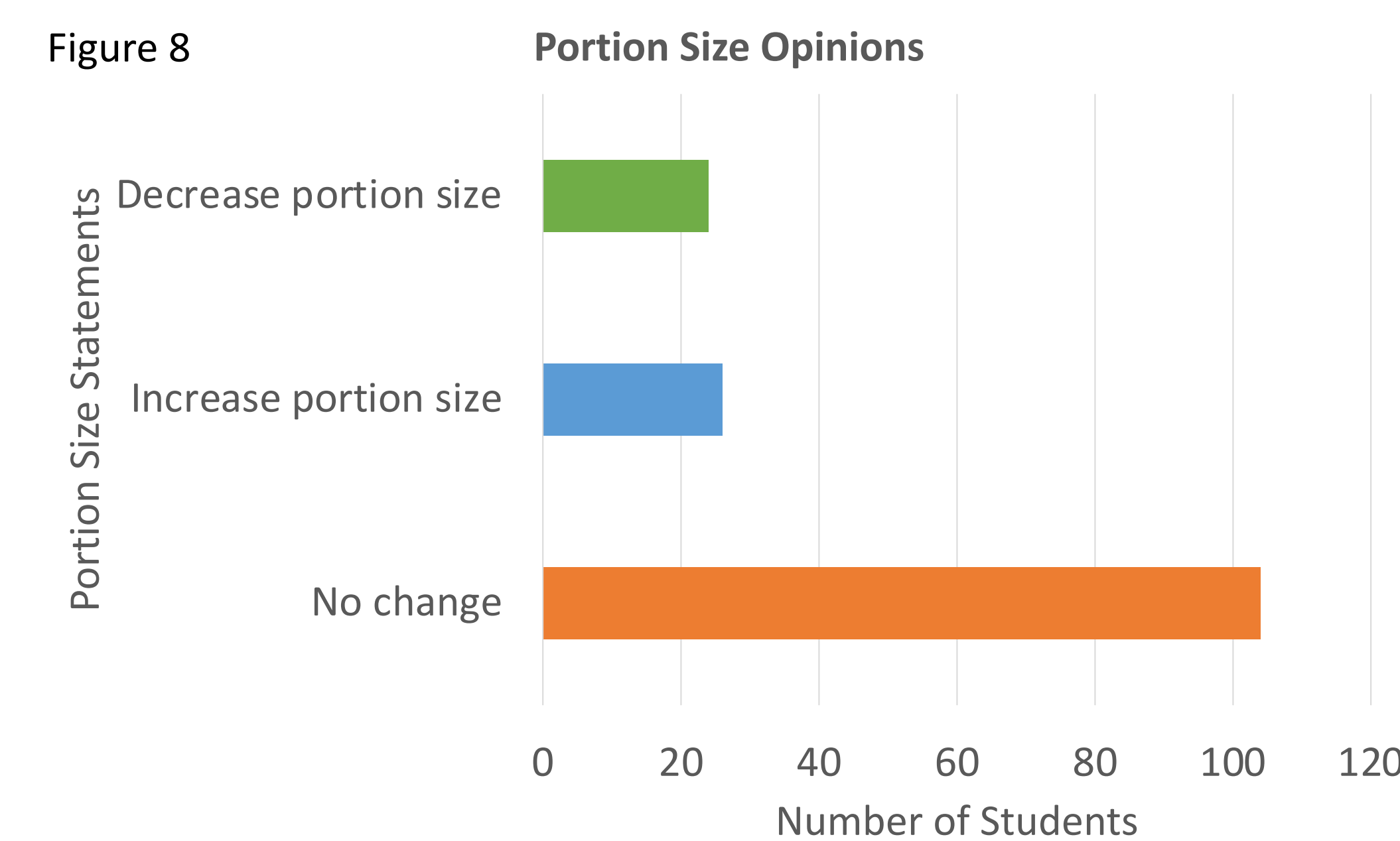
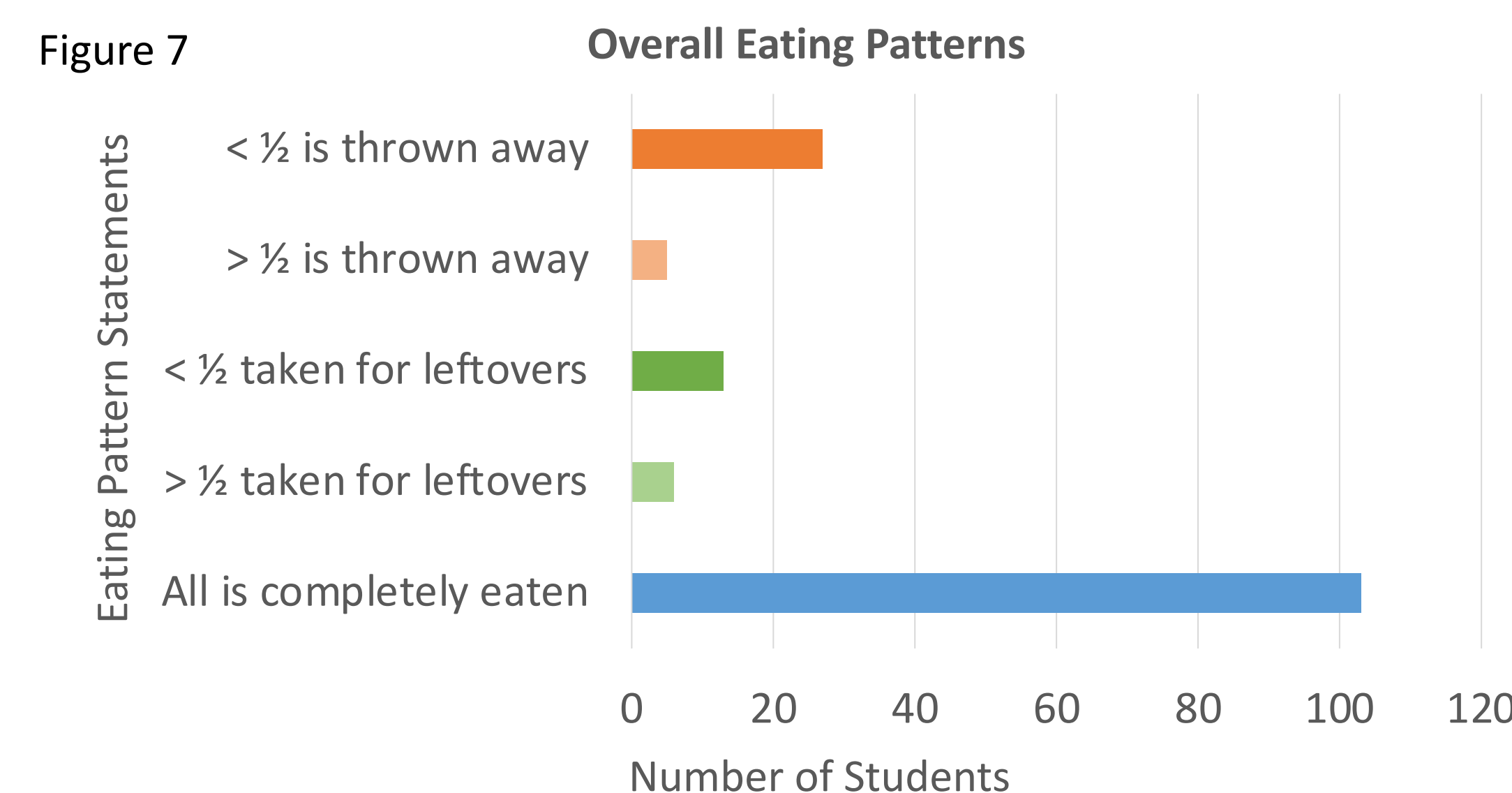
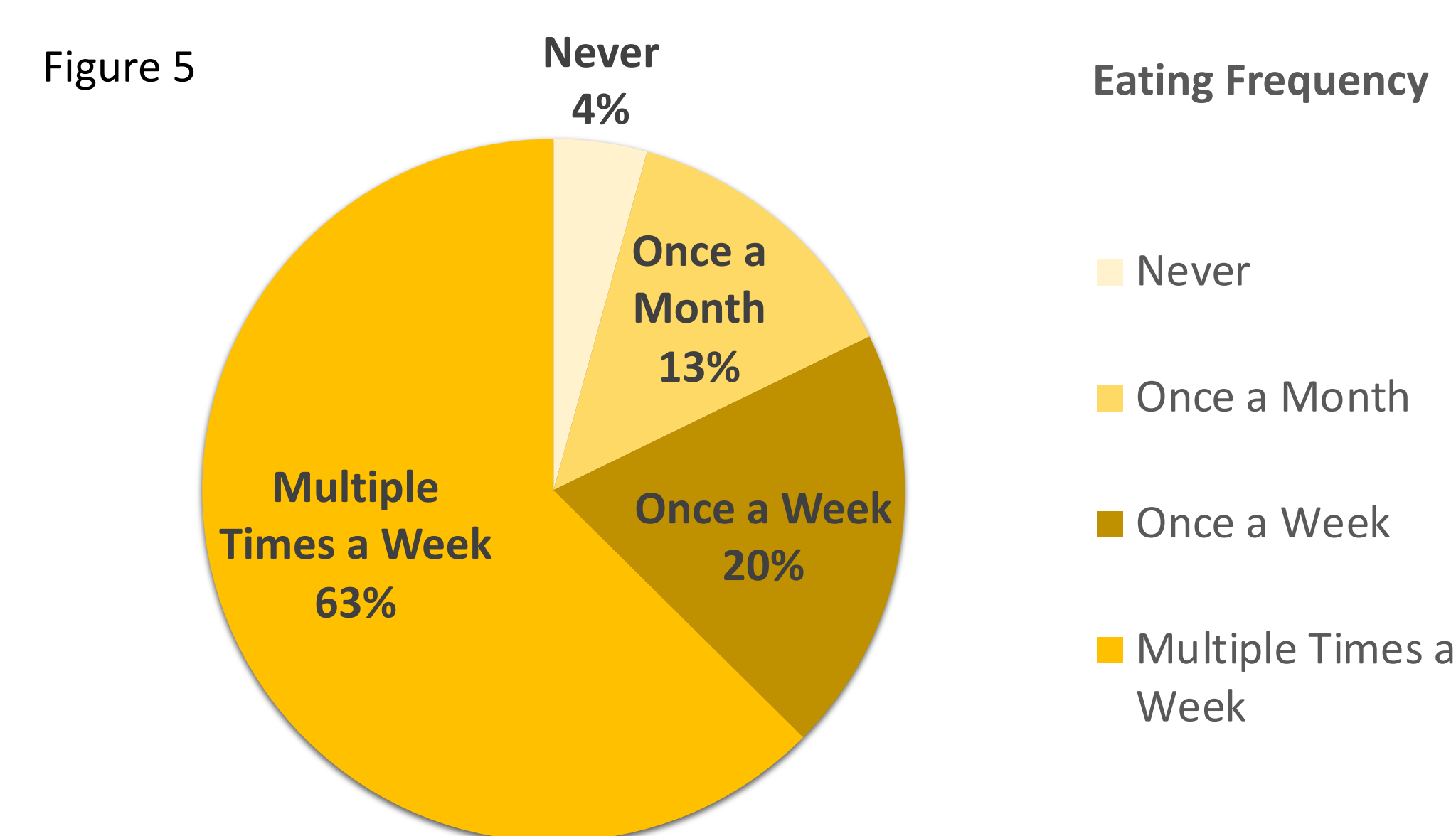
### Change in Sustainable Behavior

- We were interested in identifying change in students' sustainability behavior before and after enrollment at UNL (Figure 4).
- Prior to college, 26.54% participated in composting, and now, only 2.47% do on campus (Figure 4). This is a percentage decrease of 90.70%.



### Eating Patterns and Preferences in Selleck Food Court

- We found that the majority of students were consistent customers at Selleck Food Court (Figure 5) and had a higher preference to Selleck Cafe (Figure 6).
- A majority of participants were satisfied with portion sizes and completed their meals. Our hypothesis of a large amount of food waste coming from portion size was disproven (Figure 7 & 8).



## Final Thoughts

Due to the large discrepancy of students currently participating in sustainable practices in comparison with previous behaviors, there is room for improvement in Selleck Food Court.

As seen in our literature review, many higher education institutions were most successful with reducing their post-consumer food waste when they implemented highly interactive programming. We propose administering a long-term digital programming initiative, such as dining sustainability information displayed on TVs in Selleck Food Court. Similarly seen in other dining halls on campus, like Willa Cather Dining Center. To gain measurable progress, it takes diligent and routine programming to observe long-term cultural changes in the student population.

Most of the food packaging at Selleck Food Court is compostable, and we know a large percentage of students participated in composting pre-college. Considering these two factors, implementing a composting system may be essential to the continuation of sustainability progress in dining systems here at Selleck Food Court.

## Works Cited

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