



A Slice of Access

Cooking with out the Basics

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Purpose of our Project

- 44% of CSU students experience food insecurity.
- Food-insecure students cook less than others.
- More research is needed to understand daily challenges with food.
- Our team created a meal kit program to help students overcome these challenges.



Research Questions

- What are the main barriers that prevent off-campus, food-insecure students from cooking and eating healthy food regularly?
- How do time constraints, mental health, and financial stress impact students' ability to cook or prepare meals?
- Can a meal kit intervention increase cooking frequency, reduce food insecurity, and improve cooking confidence?



Intervention

Specifically tailored barriers

2 recipes a week

4 servings minimum

6 weeks total



BUFFALO TOFU WRAP



Demonstration video here!!

Ingredients

- Shredded cheese
- Mayonnaise
- Onion
- Celery
- Buffalo Sauce
- Lemon
- Garlic powder
- Salt
- Pepper
- Extra firm tofu
- Tortilla
- Baby Spinach



Directions

1. Drain tofu
2. Add tofu to a bowl and begin crumbling it with your fingers
3. Add shredded cheese, mayonnaise, onion, celery, buffalo sauce, lemon, garlic powder, salt, pepper to the crumbled tofu bowl.
4. Mix thoroughly.
5. Spoon ½- 1 cup of tofu mixture into the tortilla
6. Top with spinach
7. Wrap up and enjoy!

Original Recipe: <https://www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/buffalo-tofu-wrap/#RecipeCard>



Qualitative and Quantitative Data

24

Students enrolled to participate and took a baseline survey and interview

17 & 19

Students participated in follow up interviews (n=17) and surveys (n=19) at the conclusion of the program

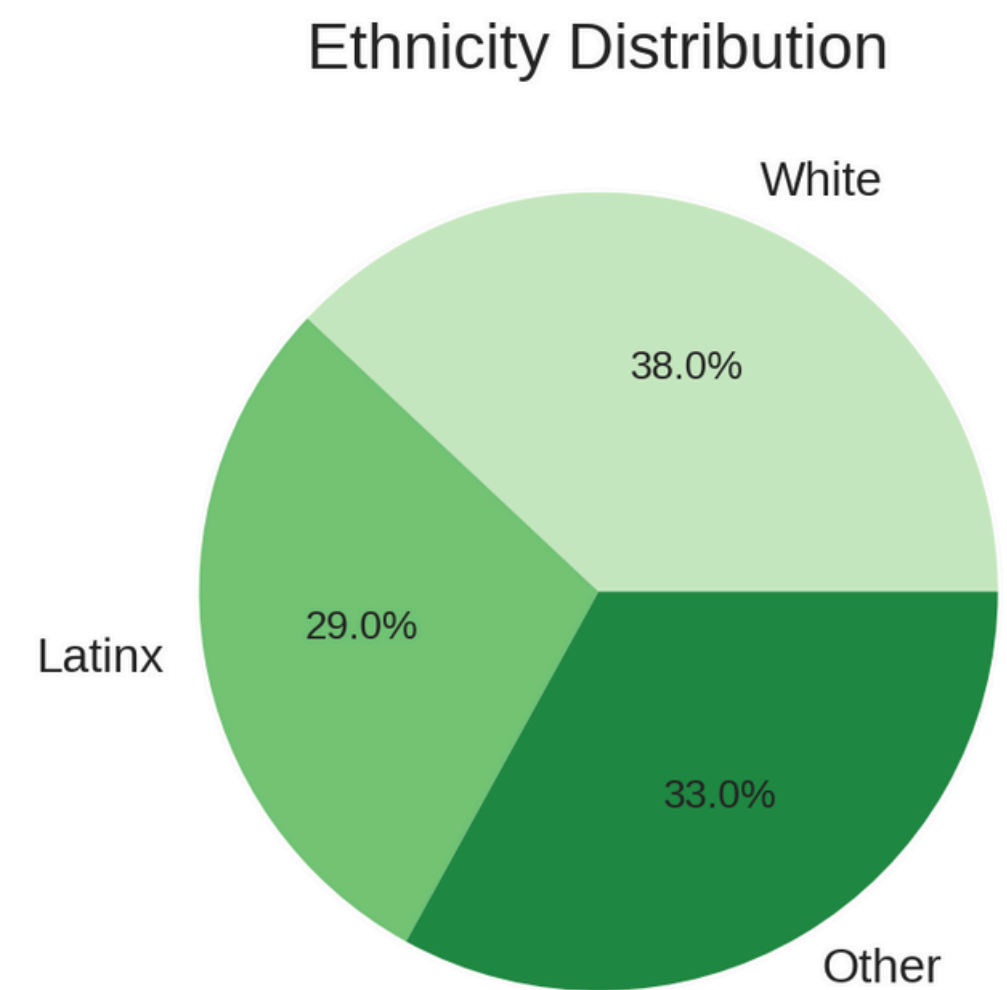
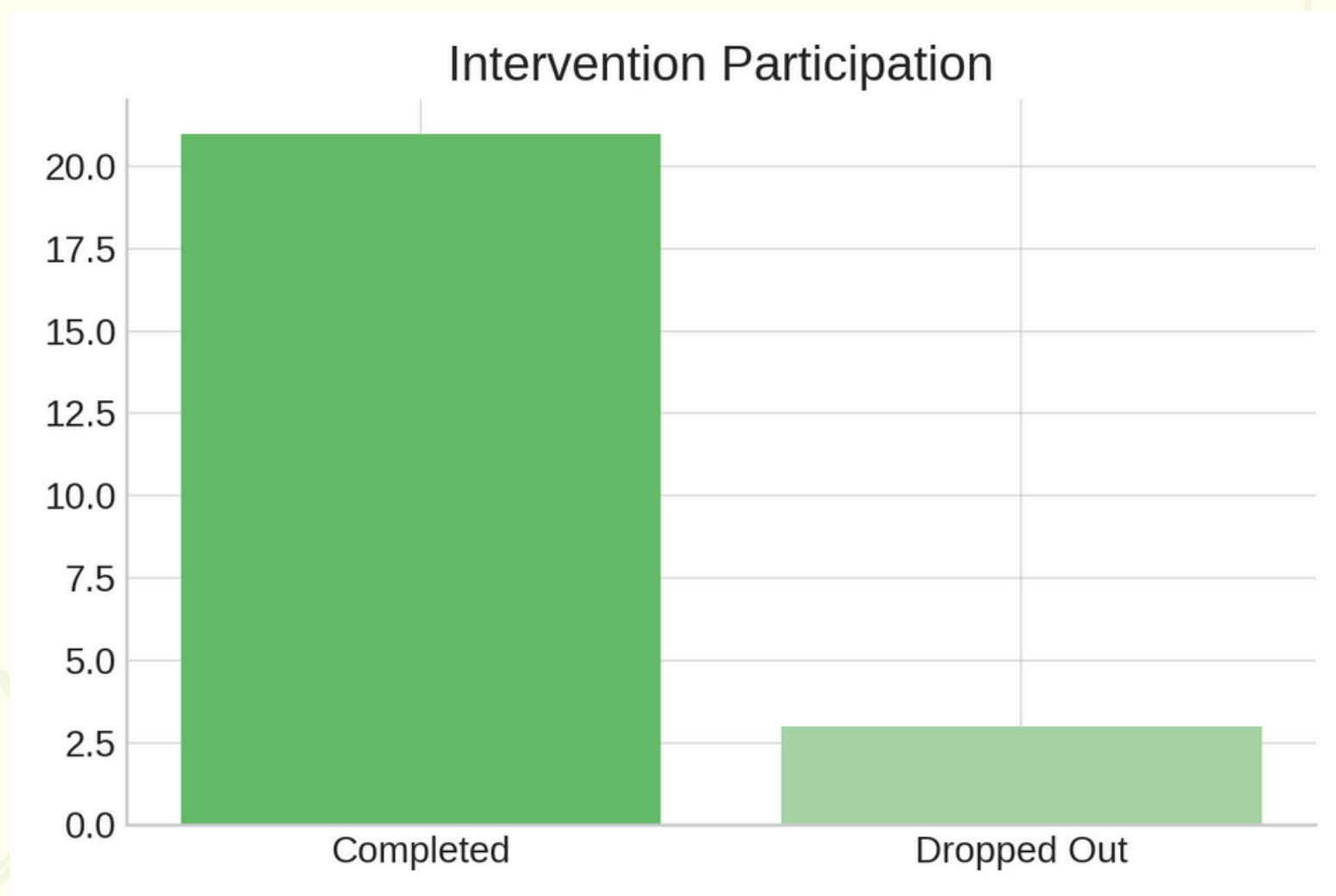
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Interviews were conducted with Chico State Administrators

240+

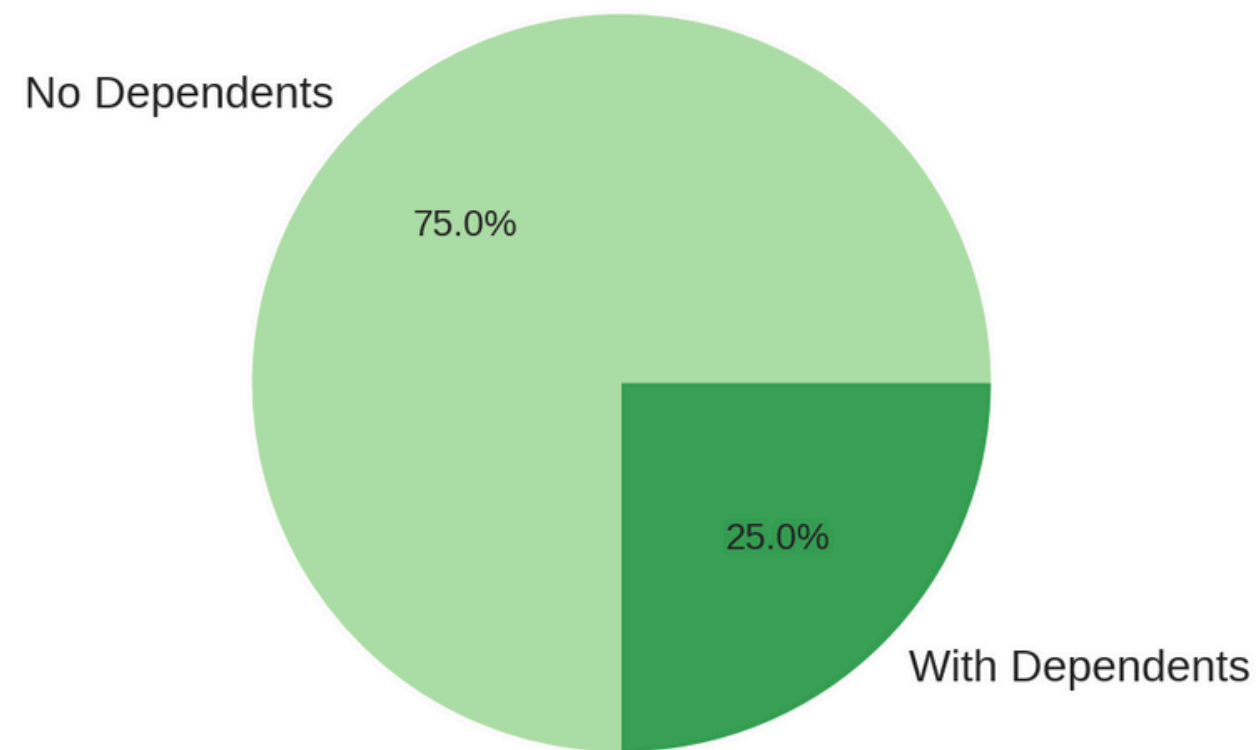
Meals delivered to participants

Demographic Data

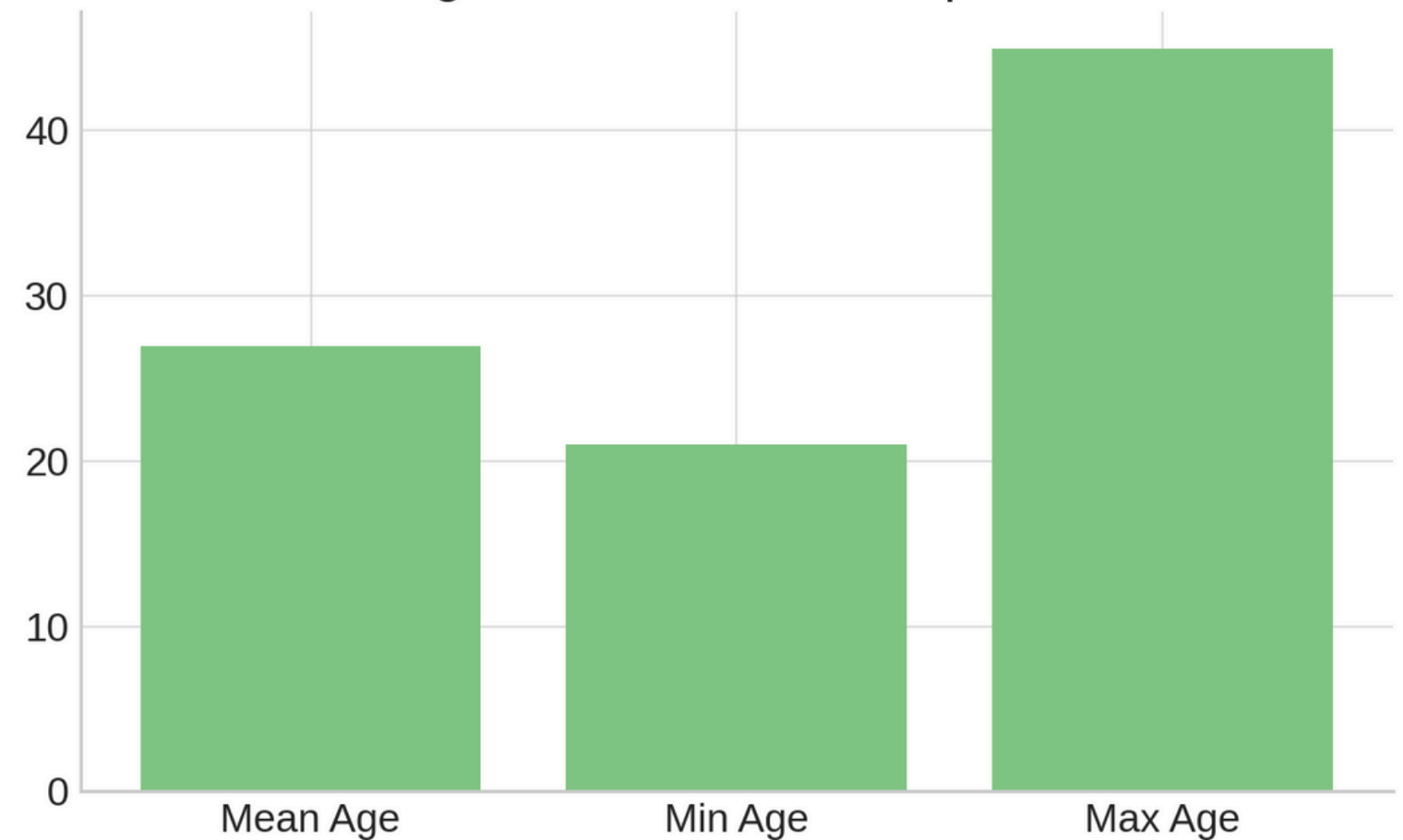


Demographic Data Cont.

Dependents Living With Participants



Age Statistics of Participants



Common Barriers

Time

Cooking Knowledge

Mental health

Expenses

Cooking Tools

How we addressed them

Delivered meals to students

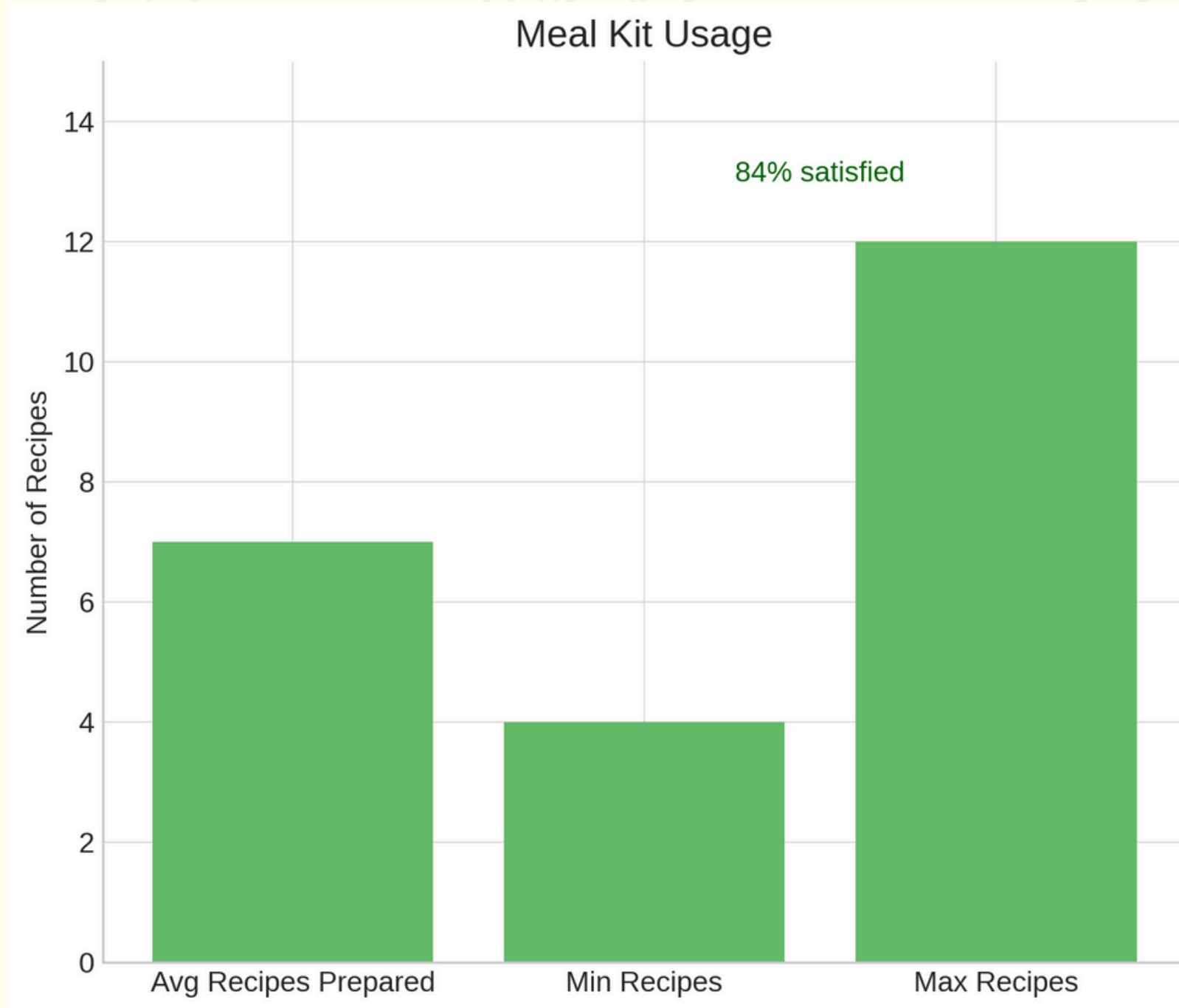
Beginner friendly recipes

Simple meals

Provided ingredients for free

Provided tools to those that
needed them

Meal Kit Usage



“It's really come in handy, and it makes cooking less of a hassle”

“It reminds me of five-minute meals, just really simple and time-convenient”

Before & After

89%

Students reported being food insecure.

58%

Significantly less students reported experiencing food insecurity.

16%

Agreed “I don’t cook”

11%

Compared to agreed “I don’t cook”

Cooking Behavior



In interviews, students explained that the kits helped them avoid overthinking meals, save time, and make cooking feel more manageable.

“It helped me with not overthinking about what I want to eat. I was able to save money because I did not even have to grocery shop like that.”



Cooking Confidence



95%

said they were
confident using
basic cooking
techniques

“The new ingredients that I would never go out of my way to purchase, like I said, getting able to try that yeast stuff, that was really cool and something maybe I would potentially purchase in the future”



58%

felt confident
cooking healthy
meals on a budget

Interpretations of findings and their significance

The program appears to have had the strongest impact on food security and cooking behavior, and served students who were already motivated to, and skilled in, cooking but faced barriers related to time, money, and decision fatigue.

While cooking confidence did not show a significant statistical shift, qualitative data suggest that the program helped students apply their skills more regularly and creatively.



Recommendations & Opportunities for Action

- **Expand the program** using pilot data to apply for grants and build new partnerships.
- **Streamline future efforts** by using established processes to reduce staff time.
- **Collaborate with others** on and off campus to sustain the program (e.g., local high schools, campus clubs, student internships).
- **Improve food waste strategies**, including leftover food alerts from Student Dining.
- **Strengthen connections** with local food banks and nearby institutions like Butte College.
- **Integrate cooking and nutrition education** into first-year student programming to broaden access and build long-term skills.

What did we learn?

1. Evolving Our Understanding of Student Basic Needs
2. Rethinking Research Through Real-World Experience
3. Personal, Academic, and Professional Growth
4. Most meaningful and Impactful Moments
5. Unexpected Findings and Shifts in Perspective
6. Advice for Future SPARK Teams



Appendices and Supporting Materials

Acknowledgements

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References

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Any questions?