



## PROMOTION VS. EDUCATION IN CHOOSING “REAL FOOD”

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The conventional agricultural system in the United States contributes to an abundance of human and ecological health problems from social injustices and public health issues to global warming and pollution. In response to these problems, universities across the country are joining the Real Food Challenge (RFC). The RFC is a national student-driven organization that defines “Real Food” as possessing at least one of the following attributes: local, fair, ecologically sound, and/or humane. By mobilizing the power of students on college campuses, the Real Food Challenge aspires to shift up to one billion dollars in dining purchasing towards “Real Food” by the year 2020. One key element for the continued success of the Real Food Challenge will be a better understanding of factors affecting college student food choice. Our research explores these factors as well as the types of interventions that can most effectively impact student food choice.

To better understand food choice factors among students, participants were asked to select from six factors and indicate which of these was most important. In order to investigate the impacts of intervention strategies, participants were drawn from courses which included at least one food-related component. Participants completed a pre-test survey and were then exposed to either Social-Marketing (SM) (n=13) or Education (ED) (n=24), with an additional group (n=18) receiving both interventions. Outreach materials were distributed using Canvas course software; the ED group completed a 45-minute educational event and the SM group received three promotional e-mails.

Study analysis includes exploration of differences in the ranking of food choice factors, frequency of food label reading, and overall assessment of the relationship between personal food choice and sustainability. In order for the Real Food Challenge to meet its lofty goals, we must close the gap between administrative decisions of sustainability and personal student food choices. Identifying intervention strategies that effectively encourage students to choose more “Real Food” will propel the movement towards a more just and sustainable food system for all.

