

Usability Research and Recommendations for ASU's Food (In)Security

Resources

User Research Summary Report

Prepared for

ASU's University Sustainability Practices

Prepared by

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Table of Contents

Usability Research and Recommendations for ASU’s Food (In)Security Resources.....	1
Table of Contents	2
Summary.....	3
Usability Research and Recommendations for ASU’s Food (In)Security Resources.....	4
Methodology	5
Study Participants.....	5
Online Surveys.....	7
In-Person Interviews	7
Usability.....	8
Results and Findings	8
Surveys and User Opinions	9
Conclusions	12
Recommendations	13
Appendix A: ASU Food Security Survey.....	14
Appendix B: ASU Food Security Survey Results.....	16
Appendix C: In-Person Interview Transcript.....	18

Summary

Our team conducted research throughout the month of January to gain a better understanding of the usability of Arizona State University's (ASU's) food insecurity resources. We conducted interviews and surveyed ASU out-of-state online students to gather information regarding their demographics, online habits, and knowledge of ASU resources. After exploring ASU's website, we found that ASU did not offer a centralized webpage to assist currently enrolled out-of-state students with obtaining resources related to food insecurity.

Our research was conducted by utilizing surveys and interviews with currently enrolled out-of-state online students. The results of this research showed that there are ASU out-of-state online students who may have experienced and/or are currently experiencing food insecurity but were unsuccessful in locating resources available to them through ASU.

As a result of food insecurity resources being unavailable to currently enrolled out-of-state online students, it is the recommendation of this team to create a webpage as well as social media tools that offer easier access to resources for food insecure ASU out-of-state online students.

Usability Research and Recommendations for ASU's Food (In)Security Resources

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to evaluate how effectively ASU makes their food insecurity resources available to ASU out-of-state online students. Throughout our initial review, our team could not locate a centralized location available to ASU out-of-state online students who were facing food insecurity. Throughout our research, we found that while many ASU out-of-state online students may have experienced and/or are currently experiencing food insecurity, they too were unsuccessful in locating any resources available to them through ASU or any resources brought to their attention by ASU. The need for such a resource clearly exists based on the research our team conducted.

We were able to determine that a resource was warranted due to the information we received back from our participants. We collected our data by utilizing two forms of analysis:

- Online surveys
- Structured, in-person interviews

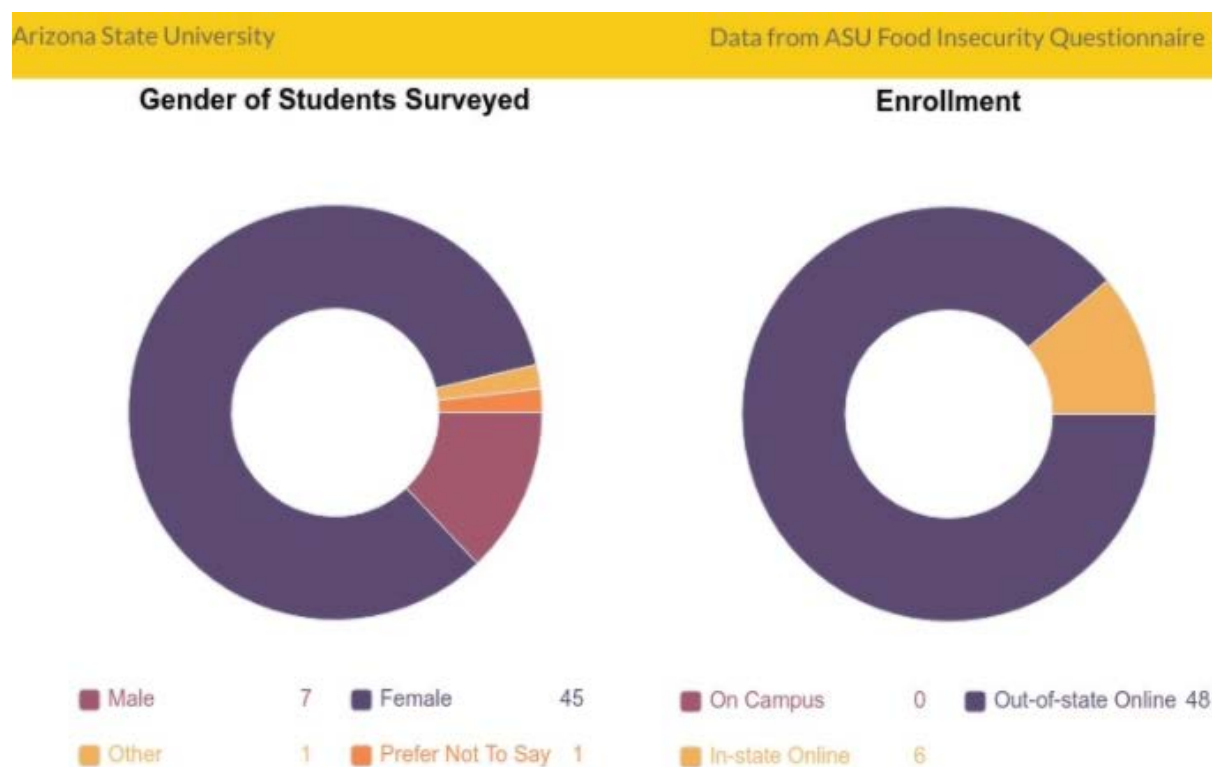
The participants within our user group were currently enrolled ASU out-of-state online students with a focus placed on the students that stated they currently are or have been food insecure during their time enrolled as an ASU out-of-state online student. We were able to place this focus on these participants specifically based on the survey and interviews conducted, which are exhibited in Appendix A and C, respectively.

Methodology

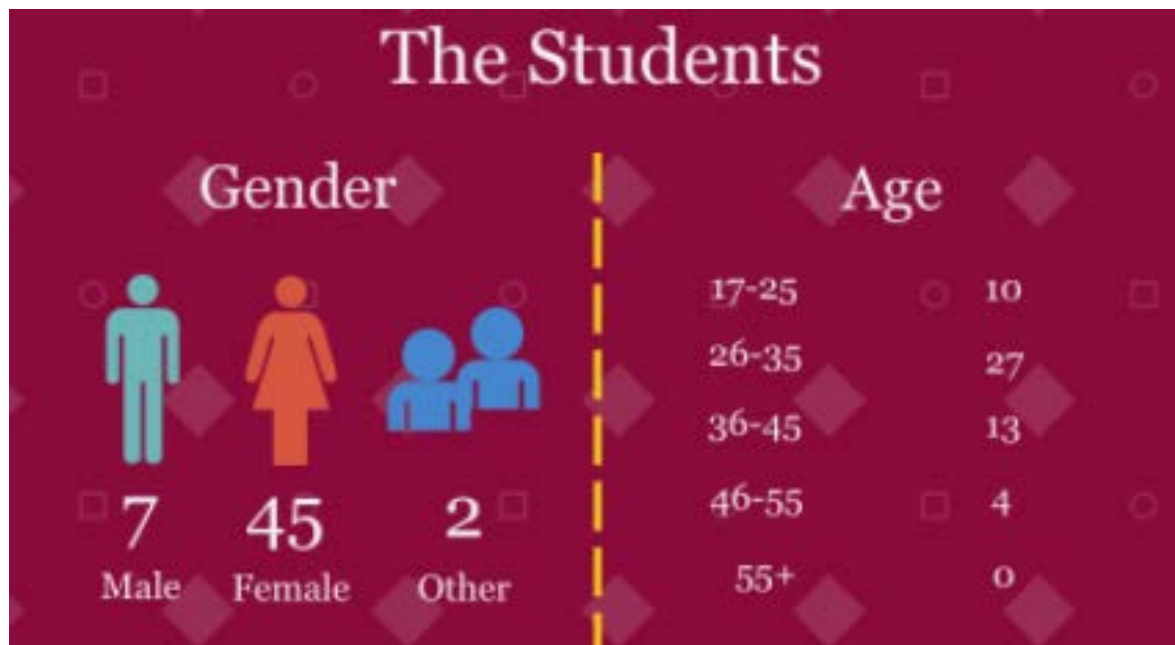
Our team started by researching what food resources were currently available to Arizona State University (ASU) online students. After we collected our findings, we created a survey for currently enrolled ASU out-of-state online students to complete anonymously. Among other things, we wanted to measure their knowledge of what food insecurity resources were available to them through ASU. Within the survey, we asked demographic questions that helped us determine if the participant was an ASU out-of-state online student so we could better understand which type of online student was affected by food insecurity. Additionally, our survey included questions regarding the participants' main means of communication, social media usage, and knowledge of specific food insecurity resources. Apart from the survey, interviews were also conducted to gain an in-depth look at what resources ASU out-of-state online students are looking to in their efforts to obtain food security.

Study Participants

For our research study, we surveyed 54 students currently enrolled at ASU. The surveys were distributed in person and via online social media groups and forums. Our survey asked target questions in order to ensure only qualified survey participants were able to proceed to the next section of our survey. Out of the participants surveyed, 48 out of 54 participants were ASU out-of-state online students, as depicted in *Chart 1*. The survey was crucial to gathering data on a large scale.

Chart 1

As it relates to age and gender demographics, *Chart 2* shows that our survey resulted in a fair mix of demographics. 27 of our participants were between the ages of 26-35 years of age, 13 were 36-45 years of age, 10 were 17-25 years of age and 4 were 46-55 years of age. Additionally, our survey results found that 45 participants were female, 7 were male, and 2 identified as other or preferred not to say. The age range of our study participants made it possible for us to adequately see how age did not discriminate when it came to food insecurity. Including a variety of participants would ensure that our study would assess our next steps to direct future ASU out-of-state online students to proper food insecurity resources. In addition, our group would be able to come up with the best method to inform students of tools and resources regarding food insecurity.

Chart 2

Online Surveys

The goal of the survey was to find out if online students knew that ASU has food resources available to them, how many students were food insecure, what food resources would be beneficial to online students, and connections with social media to food resources. The answers to these questions helped the group figure out what kind of resources out-of-state online students need to help with food insecurity. The survey data also showed that many students use social media, and because of this, it is apparent that social media is essential to making students aware of ASU resources and helping solve food insecurity.

In-Person Interviews

For the in-person interviews, the goals of the questions were different from the online email surveys. For the in-person interview, the goal was to gather more information on current resources already available on ASU's website. The answers given show that ASU's dining

services were easy to find and navigate in the interviews. ASU's dining services page isn't a problem as far as usability is concerned but it is missing a designated online student resources section. The interviews also showed that social media was essential to finding information about food resources and availability. It also gave our group a chance to ask how the participants would like to receive information about resources, and we found that texts and emails would be a great way to inform students of resources that are available to them.

Usability

Currently, ASU does not have a designated page for online out-of-state students to access food resources. The resources for food insecurity are scattered throughout ASU's website, articles, and social media groups. Most of the food resources found on ASU's website are for in-person college students and no online food resources were found for online out-of-state students. This lack of organization and web design made it impossible for our group to test a website. While searching for food insecurity resources, it took the out-of-state students research group extremely deep web dives to find resources. Due to the lack of available information, the group decided that there would be no user testing completed for ASU's website regarding food insecurity resources available to ASU out-of-state online students.

Results and Findings

Out of 54 students who responded to questions, 20.4% answered that they are food insecure. 20.4% is a decently large percentage of students, and the data proved that there is a need for food resources for many students. 50 out of 54 students were unaware of ASU having food insecurity resources. Participants were asked how interested they would be in food resources if given the option, and 21 out of 54 answered that they are incredibly interested. Only 17 students in total

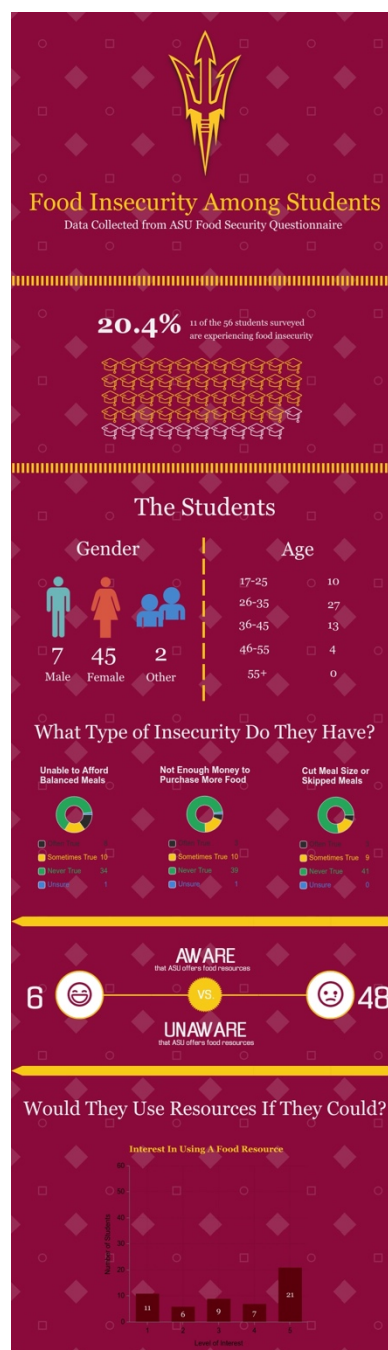
weren't likely interested in food help and resources. 19 students answered that they are unable to afford balanced meals. 14 students responded that the food they have does not last, and they cannot afford more. 12 students answered that they skipped meals or made meals smaller because they could not afford more food or a larger meal. 51 out of 54 students were unaware of the 3 current resources that ASU offers, demonstrating a general lack of knowledge of available resources. All students surveyed answered that they use various social media, with the most used platforms being Facebook and Instagram.

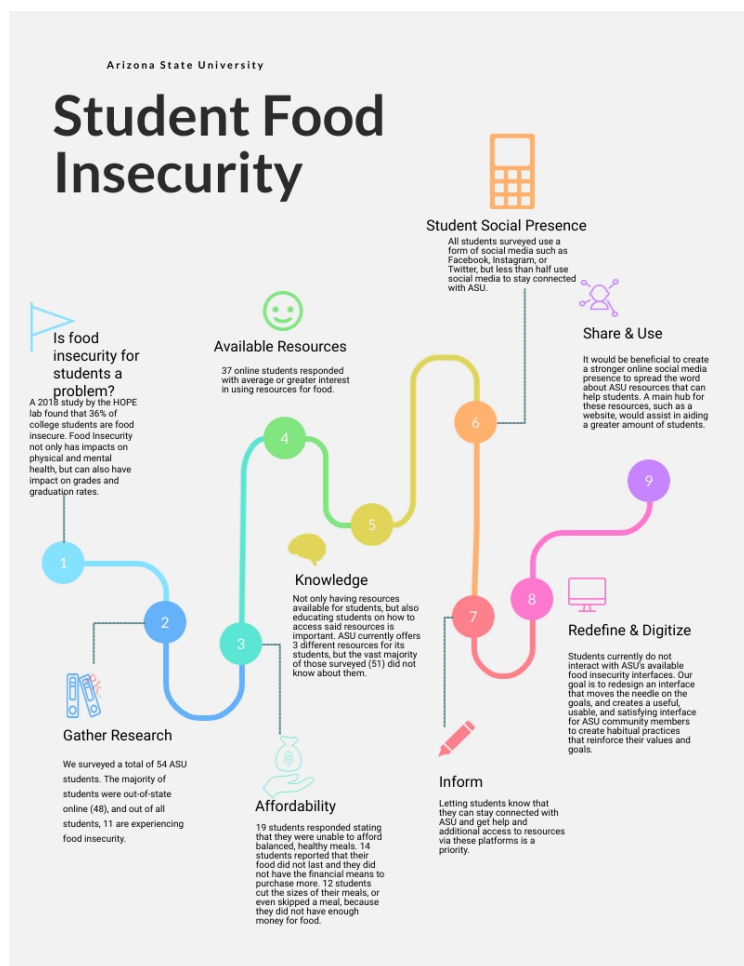
Surveys and User Opinions

Our survey started with two qualifying questions to properly distinguish the participants whose responses would apply to our research question.

Question 1 asked participants if they were currently enrolled at ASU, of which 54 responses were "Yes" that distinguished that 54 participants were currently enrolled at ASU. Question 2 asked student participants what type of student category they fell in.

This question was designed to distinguish which students were in person campus students, out-of-state online students, and in-state online students. Out of our 54 participants who attend ASU, 6 students surveyed were in-state online students and 48 of students surveyed answered to being out-of-state online students. Following question 2, participants were able to move on to the rest of the survey questions to give us insight on online out-of-state online student food insecurity.

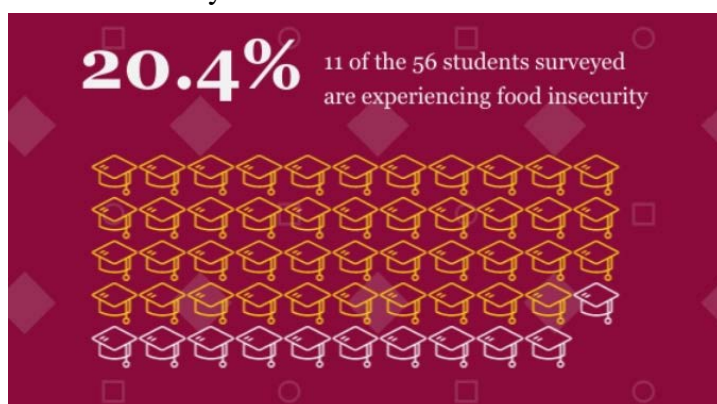




Questions 3 to 6 of our survey were designed to distinguish our survey participants demographic as well as preferred method of contact. The information we collected showed us the age and gender of all our participants and let us know how they would like to be contacted and/or informed of any further information.

Question 7 of our survey asked students if they had ever experienced any type of food insecurity while

attending ASU. This question served as the key question of our research to find out if food insecurity is really an issue within our ASU online and out-of-state community. 11 of our participants answered “Yes” to having experienced any type of food insecurity. Questions 8 through 10 were asked in order to distinguish what type of food insecurity ASU students faced so that we could better understand how much food insecurity affects online out-of-state students eating habits. Question 8 had us discover that 10 students sometimes found themselves unable to afford to eat balanced meals and that 8 students



often found this statement to be true for them.

Question 9 asked our participants if at one point they did not have enough money to purchase food and/or did not have food, and if they were able to make their food last. This question showed us that 10 students answered this question to be sometimes true and 3 students found this to be often true for them. Question 10 asked if students ever had to cut down the size of meals or skip them altogether due to the lack of money for food. 9 students answered this question as being sometimes true and 3 to be often true.

Survey questions 11 to 13 asked students' questions to find out if they have food resource awareness and if they would be interested in finding out more information about food resources.

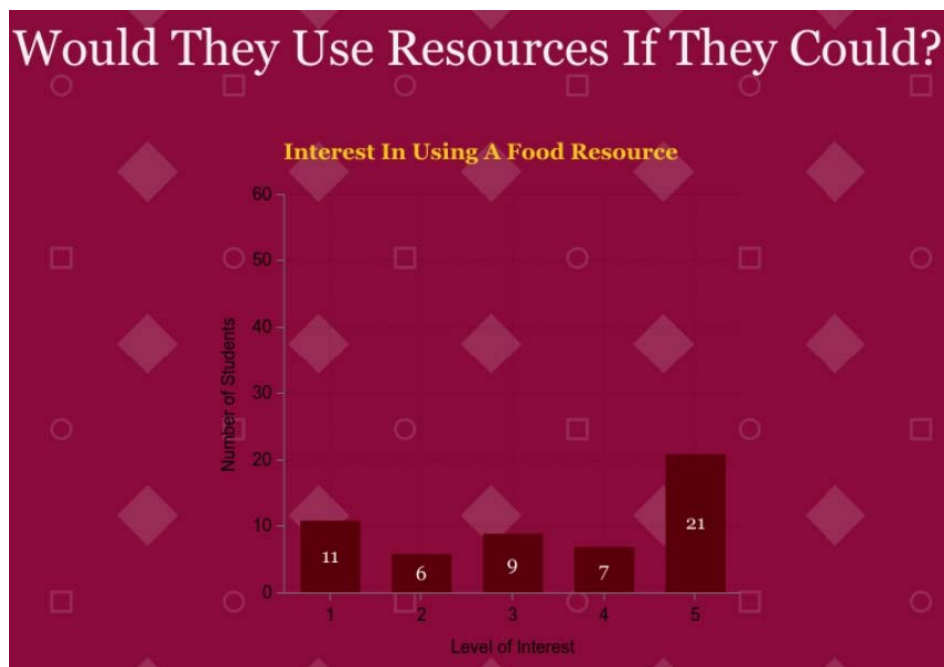


Most of our

participants who answered question 11 and 13 were unaware that ASU even offered any type of food resource. Question 12 asked students how interested they would be in resources for food, 21 of our participants were very interested in using food resources if it was offered to them, 4 were interested, 9 were moderately interested, 6 were slightly interested and 11 were not interested at all. This question gave us a very good idea of if our resources would be useful to many of our

participants and if the rest of the online out-of-state students would use the resources if given to them.

Questions 14 to 19 were designed to distinguish the best method of contact and distribution for food resources to students. These questions help our group decide where our food resources would best be used and or where they would be greatly accessed by the students who need it the most.



Conclusions

The survey and interviews were conducted in order to better understand the need for food resources among out-of-state online students at ASU. Based on the surveys and interviews, we learned that most of our participants have not experienced food insecurity during their time at ASU. Almost 20% of participants, however, have experienced food insecurity, and at some point, have not been able to afford balanced meals, or the food they had purchased did not last. Our findings also show that most of our participants were unaware of ASU's food resources, and over half of our participants were somewhat interested in using food resources offered by ASU. Based

on the data collection, it is evident that there is a need for access to food resources for online out-of-state students at ASU.

Recommendations

It is evident that a majority of out-of-state ASU online students frequently visit asuonline.asu.edu, the school's main portal for online student resources. Currently, there are not specific food resources listed that would apply specifically to this out-of-state demographic.

There should be food resources that apply to the state that each student is living in. This includes:

- Local food bank information
- Student discounts available at grocery, local and fast-food locations
- National and state funded food and meal assistance programs

ASU does not have to give details on how all this information is helpful. Instead, they should provide web links to the correct source. A separate resources page should be created specifically for online students. This will make this page easy to find and make it easier to share with other online students. Many of our users are active on social media platforms. Sharing the link for food resources, a social media page with ASU food tips and resource links would also be the most effective way for students to access this information. ASU could provide the link in their social media biographies or have a dedicated ASU food tip page. Students would be more likely to find the link when finding out more about ASU as a school. In addition, ASU could create posts on social media that target out-of-state ASU online students and help create awareness of their food resources. Facebook and Instagram should be the most active platforms considering our focus group interacted most with these social media accounts.

Appendix A:

ASU Food Security Survey

1. Are you currently enrolled at ASU?
 - Yes
 - No
 2. Which of the following applies to you?
 - I am an on-campus student
 - I am an out-of-state online student
 - I am an in-state online student
 3. What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Other
 - Prefer not to say
 4. Could we contact you if we have further questions?
 - Yes
 - No
 5. If so, what is your preferred method of communication? (Short Answer Response)
 6. What age group are you in?
 - 17-25
 - 26-35
 - 36-45
 - 46-55
 - 56 and older
 7. During your time at ASU, have you ever experienced food insecurity? (The USDA defines food insecurity as "a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life.")
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure
- For the following questions, please answer whether the statement was often true, sometimes true, or never true.**
8. In my time at ASU, I have found myself not being able to afford to eat balanced meals.
 - Often true
 - Sometimes true
 - Never true
 - Unsure
 9. In my time at ASU, the food I purchased did not last, and I did not have enough money to purchase more.
 - Often true
 - Sometimes true
 - Never true
 - Unsure
 10. In my time at ASU, I found myself cutting the size of my meals or skipping meals because I did not have enough money for food.
 - Often true
 - Sometimes true
 - Never true
 - Unsure

11. Were you aware that ASU offers food resources?

- Yes
- No

- 4 or more times a week
- Never

12. If we told you there were food resources specifically for online students, how interested would you be in using them?

1 2 3 4 5

Not Interested ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Interested

13. Which of the following ASU food resources were you aware of? (select all that apply)

- The Pitchfork Pantry
- Educational Outreach and Student Services “Basic Needs” webpage
- The M&G Initiative
- None of the Above

14. How often do you visit asuonline.asu.edu?

- 1-2 times a week
- 3-4 a week

15. What is your most common reason for visiting ASU’s website? (Short Answer Response)

16. What forms of social media do you use? (Short Answer Response)

17. Do you use social media as a form of communication with ASU?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

18. Do you use Slack to stay connected with ASU announcements?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

19. What do you do when you have questions regarding ASU student resources? (Short Answer Response)

Accompanying Email

Hello fellow ASU student,

Food insecurity is a common issue that several students have across the country. And with the current pandemic, food can be harder to come by for some people.

ASU has decided to help those students by making food more available through several programs. University Sustainability Practices (USP), in partnership with Sun Devil Dining and

Student Services, has formed a working group to identify programs, policies, and services to eliminate ASU students' food insecurity.

I am a student in a User Experience class, and my group and I are working with ASU to create a webpage where students can easily find resources and help with getting food in their homes.

Today I am asking for your help by sending you the survey attached below to understand better what students need when it comes to food resources. The survey is entirely anonymous, and your answers will help us design an ASU webpage that students who need food can get the help they need. My group and I are explicitly gathering research for students who take online courses and live out of state. Even if you are not out of state, your answers are still valuable, and we would be grateful if you fill out the survey. The survey will take roughly 10 minutes to complete.

Thank you so much for your time. And thank you for helping us help others.

Appendix B:

ASU Food Security Survey Results

1. Are you currently enrolled at ASU?
 - Yes (54)
 - No (0)
2. Which of the following applies to you?
 - I am an on-campus student (0)
 - I am an out-of-state online student (48)
 - I am an in-state online student (6)
3. What is your gender?
 - Male (7)
 - Female (45)
 - Other (1)
 - Prefer not to say (1)
4. Could we contact you if we have further questions?
 - Yes (39)
 - No (14)
5. If so, what is your preferred method of communication?
6. What age group are you in?
 - 17-25 (10)
 - 26-35 (27)
 - 36-45 (13)
 - 46-55 (4)
 - 56 and older (0)

7. During your time at ASU, have you ever experienced food insecurity? (The USDA defines food insecurity as "a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life.")
- Yes (10)
 - No (43)
 - Not sure (1)

For the following questions, please answer whether the statement was often true, sometimes true, or never true.

8. In my time at ASU, I have found myself not being able to afford to eat balanced meals.
- Often true (8)
 - Sometimes true (10)
 - Never true (34)
 - Unsure (1)
9. In my time at ASU, the food I purchased did not last, and I did not have enough money to purchase more.
- Often true (3)
 - Sometimes true (10)
 - Never true (39)
 - Unsure (1)
10. In my time at ASU, I found myself cutting the size of my meals or skipping meals because I did not have enough money for food.
- Often true (3)
 - Sometimes true (9)
 - Never true (41)
 - Unsure (0)
11. Were you aware that ASU offers food resources?
- Yes (6)
 - No (48)

12. If we told you there were food resources specifically for online students, how interested would you be in using them?

1 2 3 4 5
 Not interested ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Very interested

- 1- (11)
- 2- (6)
- 3- (9)
- 4- (7)
- 5- (21)

13. Which of the following ASU food resources were you aware of? (select all that apply)
- The Pitchfork Pantry (2)
 - Educational Outreach and Student Services "Basic Needs" webpage (2)
 - The M&G Initiative (1)
 - None of the Above (51)
14. How often do you visit asuonline.asu.edu?
- 1-2 times a week (12)
 - 3-4 a week (3)
 - 4 or more times a week (20)
 - Never (18)
15. What is your most common reason for visiting ASU's website?
16. What forms of social media do you use?
- Top 4 results**
- Facebook (44)
 - Instagram (33)
 - Twitter (16)
 - TikTok (6)
17. Do you use social media as a form of communication with ASU?
- Yes (23)
 - No (26)
 - Unsure (4)

18. Do you use Slack to stay connected with ASU announcements?

- Yes (13)
- No (37)
- Unsure (3)

19. What do you do when you have questions regarding ASU student resources?

Appendix C:

In-Person Interview Transcript

Food insecurity is a common issue that students struggle with throughout the country. Arizona State University (ASU) and University Sustainability Practices (USP) have decided to take on this challenge by providing resources for those students. I am a student at ASU taking a User Experience class and I am working on creating a webpage that provides food resources for students. I have contacted you because I would like you to answer some questions to help me understand what out-of-state ASU online students need to efficiently access these resources. Your answers will be anonymous, and this interview shouldn't take more than ten minutes. I appreciate the answers you can provide, and I appreciate your time!

1. What kind of food resources would you like to see provided by ASU for online students? (Local information to food banks, meal plans, etc....)

I would like to see information about pop-up pantries, nutrition information and food programs in my area.

2. As an online student how do you think ASU could provide you or another online student with food resources?

They could send email links and text messages about local food organizations.

3. Where would you like to see these resources provided? Orientation, Social Media, etc....?

Social media would be the best way for me and my friends.

4. Would you be willing to pay towards a meal plan you can use in your home state?

Yeah, depending on what it includes.

5. Are you able to find information on food resources on <https://www.asu.edu/> ?

Yes, I was.

6. When reviewing <https://sundevildining.asu.edu/home>, is it easy to navigate? What would you change or add?

I thought it was easy to navigate.