

FOOD INSECURITY ON CAMPUS

Community Partnership: Hearts in Action & Professional Fraternities

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Introduction

Food insecurity is a serious social justice issue that affects many college students, including students at the University of Maryland (UMD). Food insecurity means not having consistent access to enough nutritious food, and it is often overlooked because many people assume college students are financially stable. However, research shows that 23% of undergraduate students and 12% of graduate students experience food insecurity (McKibben et al., 2023). This issue is important because it can negatively impact students' mental health, stress levels, and academic performance (Wang et al., 2019). Even though resources like the campus pantry and SNAP exist, many students may not know about them or may feel stigma about using them. Because of this, our group wanted to increase awareness and support students in need through education and direct action.

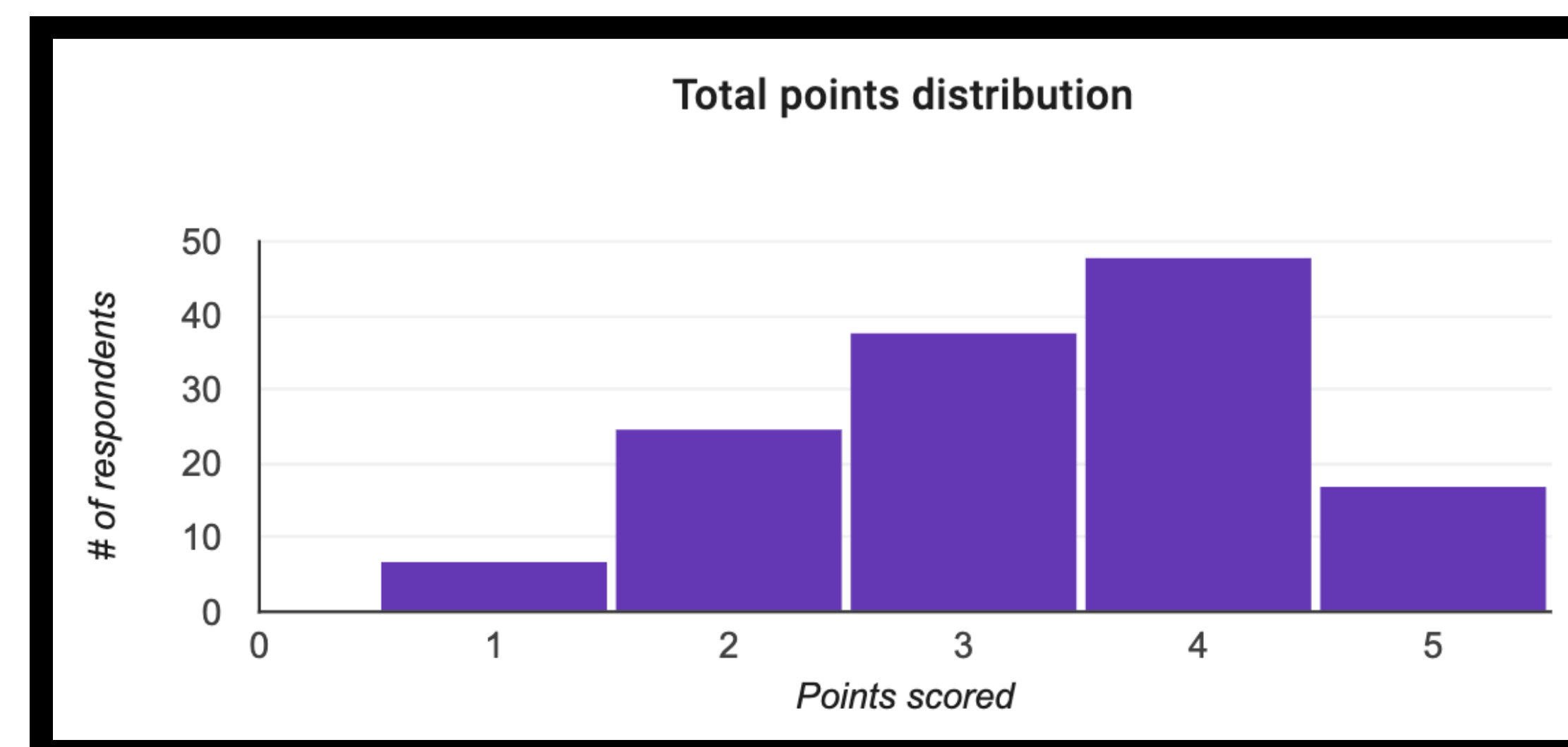
Methods

- 1 Partnered with Hearts in Action to plan and assist in their upcoming food drive
- 2 Gave presentations at professional fraternities to educate about the impacts of food insecurity and the upcoming food drive.
- 3 Administered pre and post surveys to assess effectiveness.
- 4 Assisted in donation pickup, can collection, donation bin monitoring, and flyer distribution
- 5 Provided fraternities with educational resources about food insecurity to fraternities to ensure future use and impact

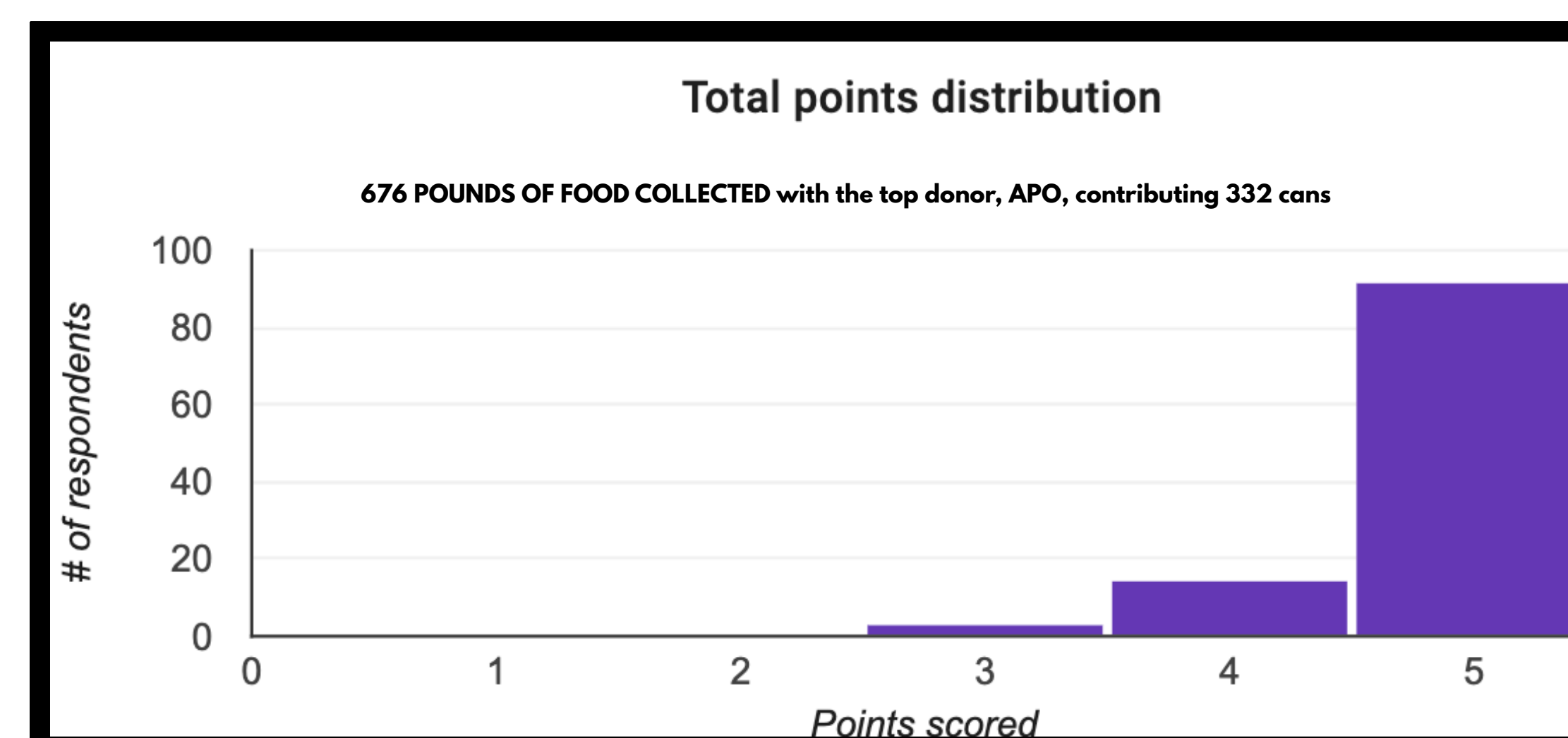
References

Maryland Food Bank. (n.d.). Hunger in Maryland. Maryland Food Bank.
McKibben, B., Smith, H., Johnson, L., & Nguyen, T. (2023). Food insecurity among college students: Prevalence and impacts on academic performance. *Journal of American College Health*, 71(4), 1123–1131* .
Wang, E. A., McKibben, J., & Storr, C. L. (2019). Food insecurity and mental health among college students at the University of Maryland. *Journal of College Student Development*, 60(3), 345–352.

Before



After



676 POUNDS OF FOOD COLLECTED with the top donor, APO, contributing **332 CANS**
Total of 526 CANS collected across all fraternities



Results

After delivering our presentation to the on-campus professional fraternities, we saw an increase of 29.8% in average assessment scores on knowledge about food insecurity within our community with the most learned on questions relating to percentage of UMD students who are food insecure (43.4% improvement) and percentage of food-insecure students who report struggling to focus in class (44% improvement). As of right now, Hearts in Action has collected 676 lbs of donations, with our top stakeholder having contributed 332 cans out of the total 526 cans.

Analysis

After analyzing the pre and post-survey results, our findings suggest that combining education with direct action effectively increased awareness of food insecurity among students. The 29.8% improvement in assessment scores shows participants gained a stronger understanding of the issue, particularly regarding how many UMD students are affected and how food insecurity impacts academic focus. Additionally, collecting over 676 pounds of food demonstrates that increased awareness can lead to meaningful community action and support for students in need.

Conclusion

One major success of our project was that we combined education with direct action by teaching students about food insecurity while also giving them a way to help through donations and involvement. Another success was receiving over 130 survey responses, showing that students were engaged and that our presentation increased awareness. We also found it meaningful that organizations were willing to meet with us and keep our materials for future use, which showed our project had real value.

One challenge we faced was coordinating with multiple organizations, since scheduling and communication sometimes slowed down our progress. Another challenge was making sure students took the issue seriously, because food insecurity is often overlooked and not always visible on campus.

Overall, this project taught us that civic engagement takes planning, collaboration, and sustainability, not just good intentions. In our opinion, our project was successful because it increased awareness, encouraged action, and resulted in real donations. Moving forward, future steps could include expanding to more campus organizations and working more closely with UMD resources like dining services and the campus pantry to create an even larger impact.