



THE IMPACT OF REAL FOOD LABELING ON STUDENT FOOD CHOICE BEHAVIOR AND ATTITUDES

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ABSTRACT

The Real Food Challenge is a growing movement of 42 American colleges and universities on 72 campuses, including the University of Utah, pledging to serve 20 percent Real Food by the year 2020. Real Food is ecologically-sound and locally, humanely, and fairly produced and consumed food. This study is the first to widely test labeling of local, humane, fair, and ecologically-sound food, so that students can identify and purchase Real Food. At the U of U, qualifying products of each Real Food factor were verified according to Real Food Calculator criteria and by product availability at select on-campus dining locations where Real Food label icons were piloted: at cafes inside the J. Willard Marriott Library and the S.J. Quinney College of Law building. Vibrant promotional signs were designed and posted to explain the meaning of each Real Food factor icon. Classes near campus dining locations were surveyed with pre- and post-labeling questionnaires during dining hours. Student participants ($N = 181$) were comprised of varied disciplines: Computer Science, Entertainment Arts & Engineering, Film, and Health Promotion & Education. With U of U Dining Services serving over 2,200 students with meal plans, as well as another 8,000 students, staff, and faculty each day, this study provides critical information about the labeling of Real Food on our diverse campus and beyond. Label research of Real Food was in cooperation with Chartwells, the University Dining Services provider, and the Sustainable Campus Initiative Fund.

