



## Abstract

The Student Compost Cooperative (SCC), a facility located at the Bioenergy and Sustainable Technology Laboratory, provides members with sustainable opportunities to complement their lifestyles. During the Spring 2021 semester, we studied how many individuals the SCC onboarded and educated across different academic disciplines and backgrounds about food waste composting and other sustainable practices. To accomplish this, attendance data from weekly orientation/education sessions were collected via an online form accessed by QR code and analyzed. Approximately a year has passed since the establishment of this data collection strategy and, with the conclusion of this semester, a year will have passed since the initial analysis of the data. As of March 17th, 2022, word-of-mouth remains the largest draw in terms of outreach. Also, non-UF orientees are proportionately equal to UF students. The SCC continues to be successful in promoting and encouraging sustainable practices across different colleges at the University of Florida and in the local community. Our analysis shows that the SCC serves as a university and community accessible resource for composting and sustainability education.

## Introduction

Composting is the microbial process of converting organic waste, such as food waste, into a nutrient-rich soil amendment that curbs environmental damage from nutrient loss and poor water retention. The Student Compost Cooperative or SCC, located in the Bioenergy and Sustainable Technology (BEST) Laboratory, is an educational facility that offers the Gainesville community the opportunity to engage in sustainable practices. Considering the public attention to sustainability, the promotion and engagement in composting within the Gainesville community is invaluable. As an educational facility, the SCC is cultivating a culture of sustainability and cooperative composting in the Gainesville area. By providing formal orientations and supplemental educational information, the SCC is developing food waste composting practices across disciplines and groups. This study, therefore, aims to investigate the proportion of individuals being orientated on composting and the method of outreach that impacted them.

## Objective

- To measure the effectiveness of compost education and outreach
- To track growth patterns and trends of outreach since the inception of the program

## Methodology

- A 9-question survey was created to understand the demographics of participating members and their respective method of outreach.
- Orientations were completed weekly in addition to providing supplemental educational materials such as social media posts and instructional videos.
- Orientees were recruited via social media, word-of-mouth, and academic connections.
- Responses were collected and data was analyzed.

## Results

- Over the course of a year, 196 individuals were orientated by the SCC.
- Of the 196, 107 individuals (55%) were UF affiliated individuals, and 89 individuals (45%) were non-UF affiliated students.
- Of the UF affiliated students, the largest proportions were the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (39%) and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (29%) (Fig. 1).
- Of the non-UF affiliated individuals, the largest proportions were from the high school *Save Earth's Environment through Knowledge* (SEEK) program (48%) and Columbia High School (41%) (Fig. 1).
- Word-of-Mouth advertising served as the best form of outreach (49%).
- Individuals from the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences were more likely to hear about the SCC from outreach methods other than word-of-mouth (Table 1).
- A small number of orientees opted to not disclose their demographic status (1.5%).

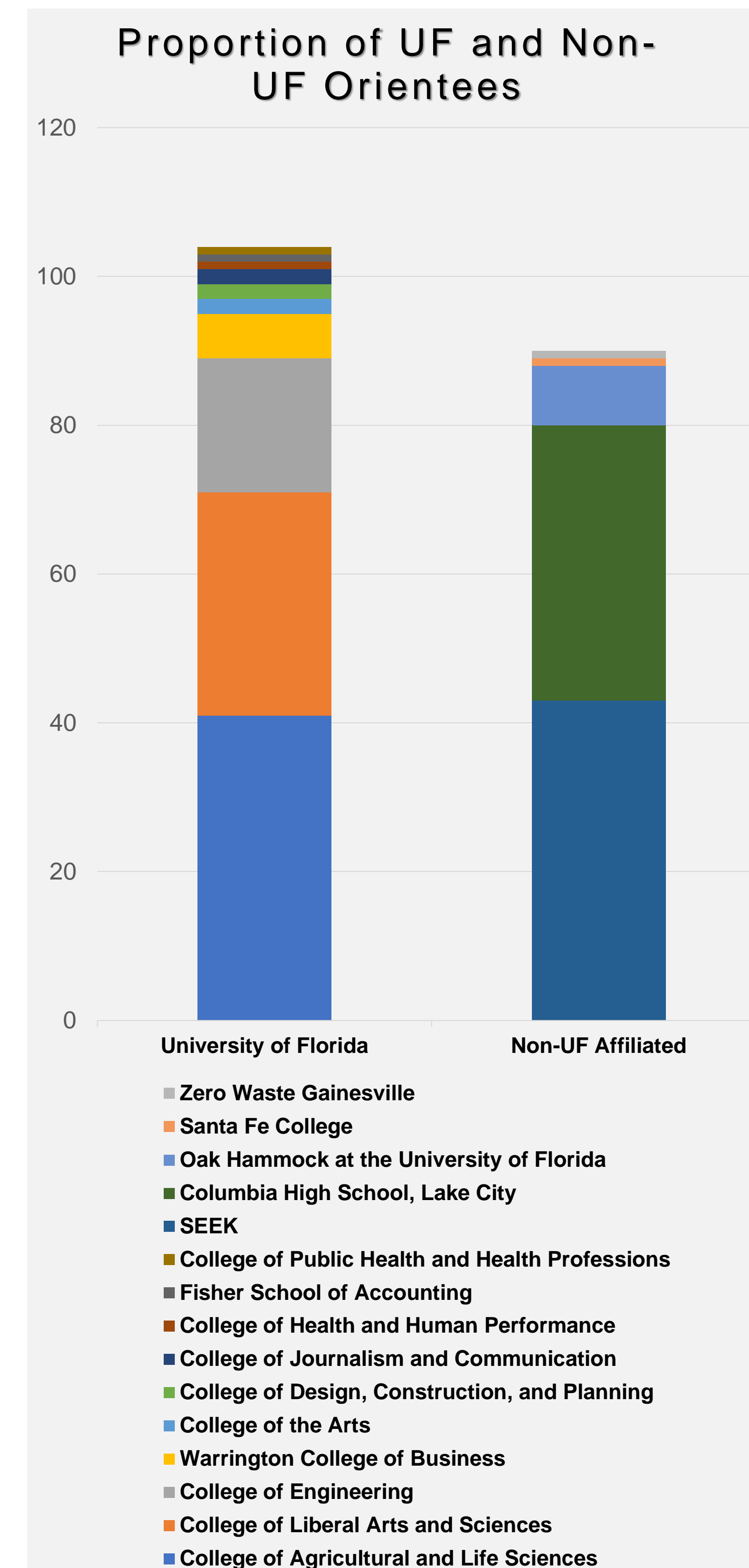


Fig. 1: Demographics of Student Compost Cooperative

Table 1: Method of Outreach by Demographic Background

Academic Colleges/Academic Background	Means of Outreach						Grand Total
	Word of Mouth	Advisor	Coursework	Student Groups	Social Media	Dr. Wilkie	
SEEK	43						43
College of Agricultural and Life Sciences	12	5	16	2	6		41
Columbia High School, Lake City			37				37
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences	16	1	3	7	3		30
Wertheim College of Engineering	12	1		3	2		18
Oak Hammock at the University of Florida	8						8
Warrington College of Business	1			4	1		6
College of Journalism and Communication	1				1		2
College of Design, Planning and Construction		1		1			2
College of the Arts	1	1					2
N/a	1				1		2
College of Public Health and Health Professions	1						1
Santa Fe College	1						1
Zero Waste Gainesville						1	1
College of Health and Human Performance					1		1
Fisher School of Accounting					1		1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>196</b>

## Discussion/Conclusion

While the proportion of UF affiliated orientees was larger than the non-UF affiliated orientees, the difference is relatively insignificant. Ultimately, the Student Compost Cooperative was successful in drawing in orientees from within the University of Florida and the broader Gainesville area.

A majority of the non-UF affiliated students were high school students and, thereby, were exposed to sustainable practices by the educational facilities at UF.

While the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALS) made up the largest proportion of UF affiliated students, CALS students did not make up the overall majority. As a result, despite the SCC's affiliation within CALS, interest in sustainable practices was evident throughout University of Florida students.

Education and outreach by the SCC serves as an effective catalyst for promoting sustainable lifestyles among the student body and the local community.

### Photos of the Student Compost Cooperative

Pictured is the communal compost bins (Top), an orientation (Bottom Left), and communal gardens (Bottom Right)



## Contact Information

Visit our website:

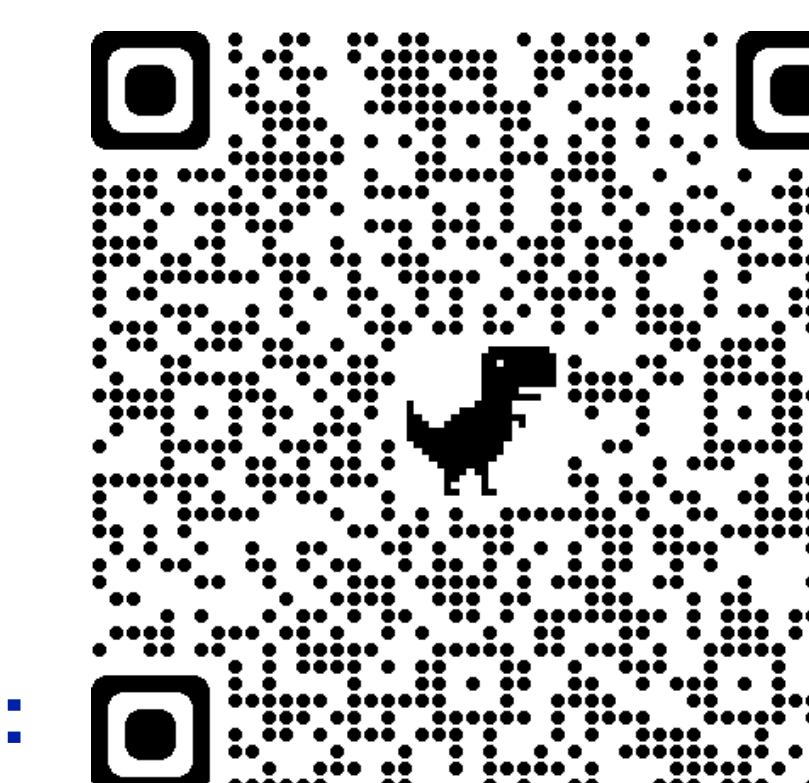
<http://biogas.ifas.ufl.edu/SCC/index.asp>

Facebook:

UF Student Compost Cooperative

Instagram: @uf.scc

Directions:



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