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Scrape Your Plate: Understanding and Promoting Composting Habits on a College Campus

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Poster Presentation P3

**SCRAPE YOUR PLATE: UNDERSTANDING & PROMOTING
COMPOSTING HABITS ON A COLLEGE CAMPUS**

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A significant percentage of the nation's waste is compostable, but a majority of this waste ends up in landfills, which are quickly reaching capacity (Sussman, Grifford, & Scannell, 2013). Two studies were conducted to examine ways to improve the success of a composting system used by patrons of a college campus dining facility (i.e., composting--recycle--trash bins). In the first study, an educational intervention was used to broaden students' composting knowledge. Classes of students were either provided with information about composting (intervention group) or no information (control group). All participants then completed a survey about their attitudes, behaviors, and knowledge about composting. Overall, 97% of the 135 participants wanted the composting system to succeed, but only 25% reported that they always composted correctly. Intervention and control group participants did not differ in attitudes toward composting, however, *knowledge* of composting was significantly higher in the intervention group. In the second study, two waste audits were conducted (Fall 2016, Spring 2017) to assess the degree of contamination (i.e., non-compostable items) in the composting bins. Between these audits, several changes were made to enhance the clarity of the system (e.g., simplified signs, addition of lids on the composting bins). Preliminary analyses indicate substantially less contamination subsequent to the changes. Findings have implications for promoting proper composting habits on college campuses.