

# Students Feeding Students: Gleaning Fresh Produce for Food Insecure Bruins

Savannah Gardner  
University of California Global Food Initiative Fellowship



## Introduction

This Global Food Initiative Fellowship provides an innovative solution to bridge the gap two food injustices in our community: food waste and lack of accessible healthy food.

In an ongoing partnership between a Los Angeles nonprofit, Food Forward, and a UCLA undergraduate organization, Swipe Out Hunger, UCLA students glean excess produce that would otherwise go to waste from local farmers markets every week. The gleaned produce then gets delivered to food insecure Bruins at three locations both on and off campus. The gleaned produce both eliminates organic food waste and provides fresh, healthy food to those who need it most.

## The Framework of Gleaning

Two GFI Fellows, Tyler Watson and Savannah Gardner, established the gleaning program in Summer and Fall of 2015, connecting many different organizations and student groups across the UCLA community. Here are the key relationships that create the structure for the gleaning program to happen:

- Food Forward, a food recovery LA nonprofit, gleans from over 20 farmers market across the LA area. Swipe Out Hunger provides volunteers for the markets, then brings back produce for their fellow students.
- There are three locations that receive the gleaned produce, as identified with the help of the UCLA Food Security Work Group:
  - 1) University Village: An off-campus UCLA family housing center for graduate and doctoral students. Students bring their own tote bags to choose their own produce in a grocery-style fashion. University Village receives the majority and widest range of produce, including greens, herbs, and fruit.
  - 2) 580 Café: An open-door study space and hot meal center for UCLA students hosted in a church across the street from campus. With the help of Jeanne Roe Smith, 580 Café receives grab-and-go fruit, such as avocados, grapes, and strawberries.
  - 3) Community Programs Office (CPO) Food Closet: A centralized, anonymous food pantry in the heart of campus, predominantly utilized by undergraduates. The Food Closet receives grab and go fruit and packaged vegetables, such as packaged lettuces, avocados, and oranges.
- Vans for transportation are provided by the Community Programs Office with an in-kind donation.



Swipe Out Hunger volunteers carries a box of fresh produce back from the vendor at the Pacific Palisades Farmers market.



## Overview of Gleaning Program

Here is a snapshot of the program thus far:

- Over **30 weeks** of gleaning
- **40** unique volunteers, 2-5 per week
- **8,100 pounds** of produce distributed to UCLA students
  - 200-1200 pounds gleaned every Sunday
  - ~100-600 pounds delivered to UCLA students per week
- An additional **15,000 pounds** of produce collected for local nonprofits in Los Angeles
- **5 main collaborators:** Swipe Out Hunger, Community Programs Office, 580 Café, University Village, Food Forward



Swipe Out Hunger volunteers weigh boxes of produce collected during the farmers market (above left). They then drive the boxes first to University Village, where graduate students and their families line up (above right) to “shop” for the gleaned produce in a grocery-style fashion (below).



## Behind the Scenes

Outside of the Sunday glean, there is still work being done by all of the partners involved. Some of the outside work is as follows:

### Before the Glean:

- In order to secure a van, a Driver Safety Trained student checks out a van on the Friday before. (To be Driver Safety Trained, a student must go through a 1.5 hour training of vehicle safety, risk, and protocol.)
- Using a Google Spreadsheet sign-up, students sign up to glean in advance. The Point Person who is leading the glean for that week makes contact with all students signed up the Friday before Sunday's glean.

### After the Glean:

- UCLA volunteers report number of boxes delivered to University Village, 580 Café, and CPO Food Closet in a Delivery Data Google Spreadsheet.
- CPO Food Closet Interns meet with 580 Café and pick up boxes in 580 Café's fridge to bring to the Food Closet every Monday at noon.



## Example Sunday Schedule

This is an example of the process of a Sunday glean at the Pacific Palisades Farmers Market:

- 11:30am: Meet at the Bruin Bear to leave campus in CPO Van
- 12:00pm: Arrive at farmers market, meet up with Food Forward Volunteer Team Leader
- 12-12:45pm: Distribute Food Forward boxes to vendors
- 12:45-1pm: Break
- 1-2pm: Pick up and weigh boxes filled with produce
- 2-2:30pm: Drive to University Village
- 2:30-2:45pm: Drop off all but four boxes of produce for University Village grocery-style pick ups
- 2:45-3:15pm: Drive to 580 Café, drop off remaining boxes
- 3:15-3:30pm: Return van keys to CPO

Congratulations, you've completed your first glean!



## Nutrition Component

The produce —kale, rutabaga, persimmons—is not necessarily familiar to students who receive it. To increase the nutritional knowledge and utilization of the produce, the gleaning program has tapped into other entities on campus to collaborate in cooking demonstrations. The main cooking demos have allowed for collaboration between groups, such as FITTED, a CPO exercise and nutrition club, the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health Nutrition Club, 580 Café, and UCLA's Healthy Campus Initiative.

## Takeaways

Streamlining the process has been significantly more difficult than we imagined. Volunteers forget to check out the vans, wake up late on Sundays, or are unable to go last minute. Dealing with the week-to-week road bumps proves how important it is to have a sound structure that anyone in Swipes, GFI Fellow or not, can transition into leading.

Despite any of the obstacles, the program has been incredibly successful. It has repurposed over 8,100 pounds of produce for food insecure Bruins and an additional 15,000 for other food justice nonprofits in Los Angeles. What began as two Fellows' Global Food Initiative project this past October will now continue as an established weekly site for Swipe Out Hunger, providing food-insecure students with fresh produce for years to come.

## Future Goals

To ensure the longevity of the program, the gleaning program will need to:

- Expand the volunteer base to those who receive the produce and the wider UCLA community
- Implement ongoing surveys or other methods of data collection for more concrete analysis
- Collaborate for additional cooking demonstrations/classes to complement the produce deliveries
- Train a non-GFI member of Swipe Out Hunger in Fall/Winter 2015-2017 to ensure longevity

Once we can ensure the longevity of this program, we'd love to look into other means of gleaning, such as from the Westwood or UCLA Farmers markets.

## Acknowledgements

I want to firstly thank Swipe Out Hunger for taking on this project with open arms this year, as well as our partners at 580 Café and the Community Programs Office. Thank you to all of our weekly volunteers, as well as Tyler Watson, for being a wonderful fellowship partner and mentor in this process. Thank you to the Healthy Campus Initiative for fully supporting our gleaning effort and the UC Office of the President for funding the Global Food Initiative and demonstrating to the rest of the higher education how important food access is.