

**FEBRUARY 3, 2023**

**University of Arizona  
Campus Pantry Benefit Dinner**

The Food Science Club at the University of Arizona is a tight-knit group made of peers, educators, and University associates. We share a love for Food Science. A select number of the U of A Food Science Club members were honored to be representatives of the IFT Cactus Section at the annual University of Arizona Campus Pantry Benefit Dinner that took place on February 3, 2023.

Kirat Bains, Kristina Raygoza, and me – all avid club members – sat at the Cactus Section IFT table for the event, along with Professor Tedley Pihl, Dr. Sadhana Ravishankar, Professor Yonarki Garcia Valera, and Dr. Patricia Sparks. It was a semi-formal event, and the room was full of an exuberant energy. The table was decorated with Campus Pantry pamphlets and stickers. Tons of donors were at the banquet.

Tours of the new facility were being given. The newly renovated facility was set up and optimized to facilitate the Campus Pantry's mission – to reduce food insecurity in our community. At the grand ballroom during that night, we sat together at the furnished table; we began to eat a punchy arugula strawberry salad as the keynote speaker started. The speaker talked about the achievements of the Campus Pantry's staff, many of whom were students long associated with the University of Arizona.

Half a dozen graduate students got up one by one to the podium to talk about how they were changed by the Campus Pantry. To these students, the Campus Pantry's vision lives every day – it is a beacon of hope for students in need. Clearly, they were proud to be part of it. The student workers were the embodiment of the mission of Campus Pantry.

The keynote speaker discussed a lot about her personal commitment to Campus Pantry and stressed that the story of Campus Pantry is a success story about an idea that grew and grew. Today, they feed people in need using the food and money that is donated.

I listened to the speakers talk about the reasons why the Campus Pantry is so good for the University community. The servers brought out the main entrees,

and I struggled not to be too distracted by the meal, and I gave the speakers almost all of my attention. We dug into the main course and I felt the meaning of the community.

We finished eating, and the speaking part of the event ended. We laughed together about the astronomically sweet custard, and we talked more about interesting food that we had eaten. By the end of the meal, it felt like we connected with the people that really work hard to help the University students who need support. And how could I not feel connected to the Campus Pantry? The Food Science Club's very own Caleb Fernandez is a student worker at Campus Pantry.

We all had done some part in helping the Campus Pantry continue to help people. I left that night feeling very grateful about the whole experience; I left after I walked through the silent auction. The crowd in the ballroom had a great energy, and I could feel the sense of purpose and excitement for the future.