

# The Citizen Science Challenge: Engaging University Students in Science Outside the Classroom

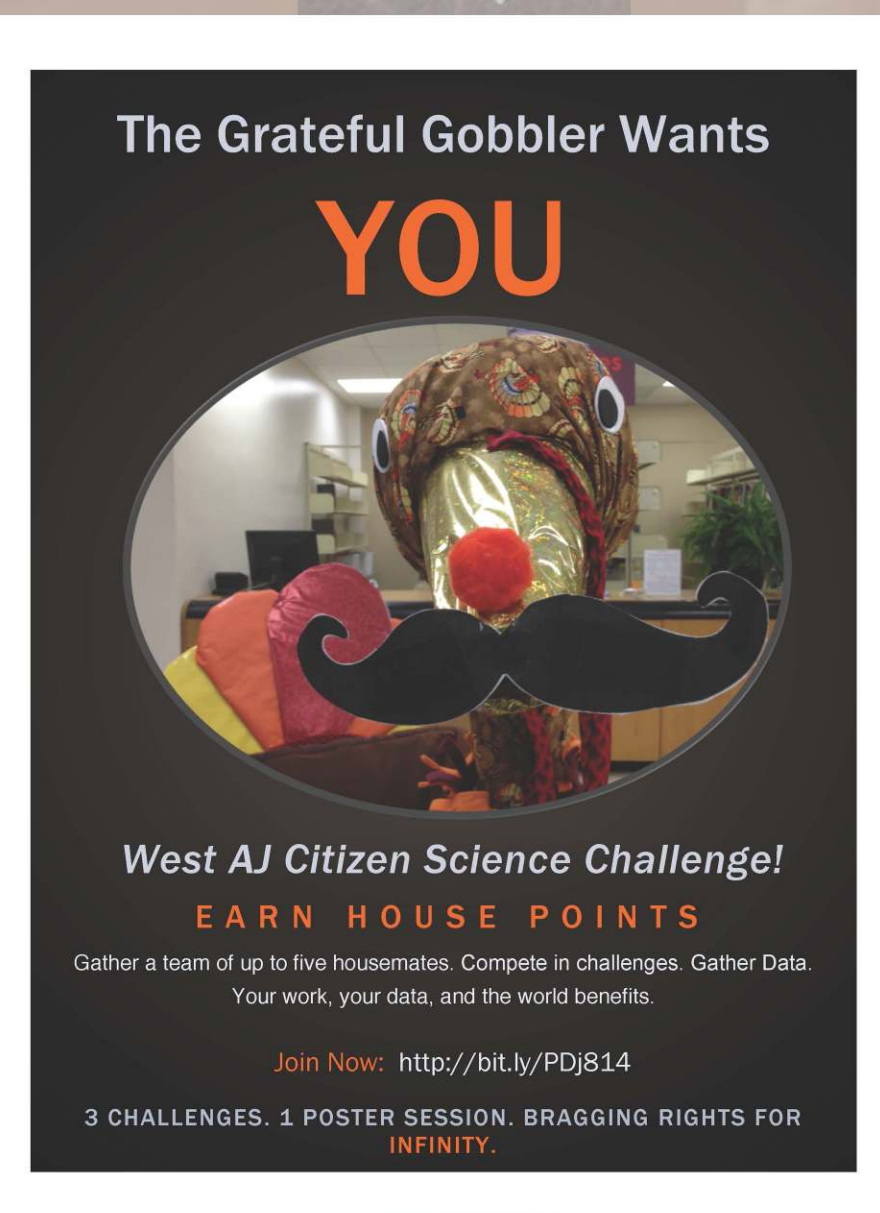
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## What is Citizen Science?

Also known as public participation in scientific research, citizen science enables those without formal scientific education or training to contribute to the greater body of scientific knowledge through small tasks or observations. Citizen science projects often make findings from these observations freely available to the participants, which enriches their own understanding of science.

Projects range widely over many different academic disciplines and are often related to popular hobbies, such as astronomy or bird watching. Many projects use gaming elements to make the tasks or observations fun.

We wanted to demonstrate to students that “real science” isn’t just limited to class work. Neither it is something they might do after graduation. Instead, science surrounds us every day, and it doesn’t necessarily take a lot of effort to make meaningful contributions.

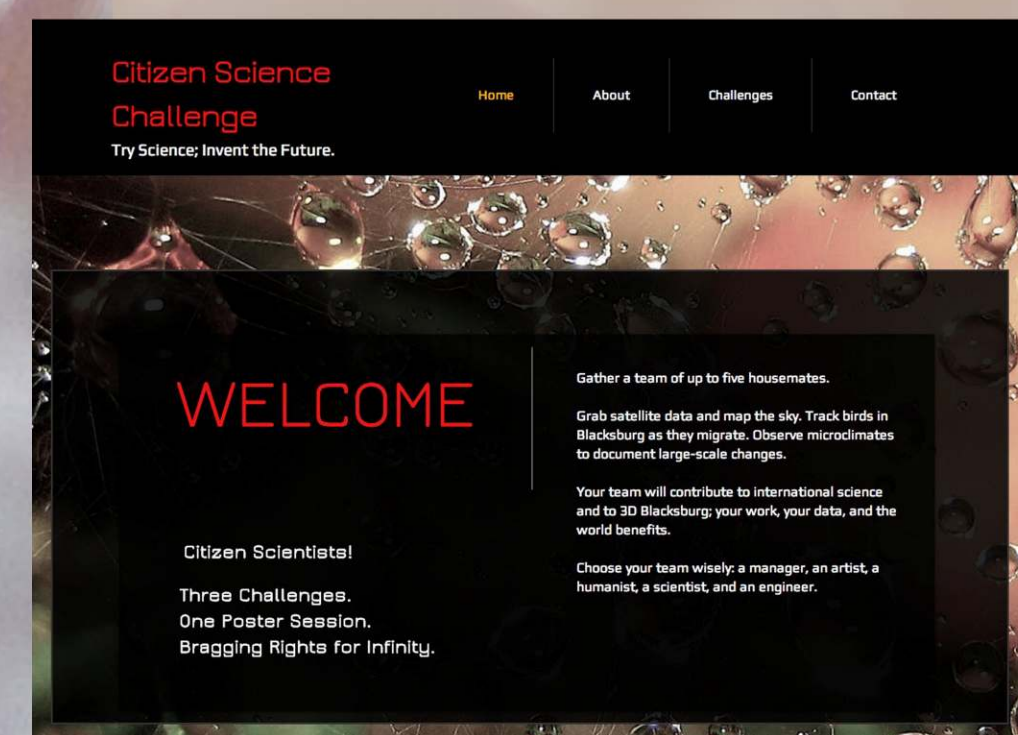


## West Ambler Johnston, Live & Learn

As a newly formed live-learn community, West Ambler Johnston (West AJ) wanted a fun competition to encourage residents to begin community building. Organized into four houses, residents have house colors, special faculty affiliates, and opportunities to bond socially and academically.

The primary vehicle for promoting community building is the House Cup Competition. Competing for the House Cup, students are invited to earn points through academic, athletic, community-service, and recreational tracks. Points are accumulated throughout the year and the house with the highest total wins the House Cup.

The Citizen Science Challenge is the academic track to earn points for a house. Organized as three unique challenges, students earned points for registering their teams and completing a specific challenge. Teams could participate in a single challenge or compete in all three. The team with the most total points wins the Citizen Science Cup, earning 300+ points for their house.



## Overview

### What worked?

1. Early Collaboration with Residence Hall
2. Integration into the West AJ House Cup Challenge
3. Word of Mouth Advertising via Graduate Fellows
4. Presentation of Trophy (built a great deal of interest, bragging rights, set excitement for next year’s challenge)

### What will be improved for next year?

1. House Cup Point System in place and widely known
2. West AJ community more defined, norms and expectations better known
3. Improved, targeted advertising
4. New Challenges focused on “Serious Play” such as FoldIt and Old Weather

### Significance

1. Informal Learning
2. Student Driven Knowledge Production
3. Resident Hall and Library Collaboration
4. Embedded Librarianship

