

Feeding Western: Addressing Food Insecurity on Campus

Katelyn Notestine, Emily Schauble, Makena DeGolier

Fall 2017

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Statement of Need	3
Project Description	4
Case Studies	4
Budget and Funding	5
Sustainability	6
Monitoring and Evaluation	6
Conclusion	7
Appendices	7

Executive Summary

Food insecurity is an issue dealing with a lack of access to foods, especially foods of higher nutritional quality. This is an issue that has been recently identified on Western's campus by our research. Feeding Western is a project that proposes research, assessment, and solutions that will address the current need. We propose implementing a short-term solution that starts decreasing food insecurity immediately on campus. We want to implement a food pantry on campus that will be located in birnam wood. This program would be supervised by the Feeding Western team, as well as Christian Urcia, and then passed down by selected members for the future. We will present our research for WWU faculty, and work on getting funding, donations, and support from westerns community, as well as Bellingham.

Statement of Need

It has been shown through multiple studies on college campuses across the nation that food insecurity is a problem. Nationwide, one in five college students have very low food security. Here at Western, we have found through our campus wide assessment, students are experiencing food insecurity. Our data shows that 633 students answered "Yes" to the question "Did you ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money to afford a balanced meal?". That's about 53% of students surveyed. It is time that Western addresses the needs of their students with food insecurity. The findings from the assessment have helped us determine the need for food help services. This could include, but is not limited to, an on campus food pantry, re-allocating unused meals and food from the dining halls, and re-allocating fresh produce grown in the Outback Farm to students in need. Currently, the only available help Western students can get through the school is from the Financial Aid office, as well as a small file cabinet in Fairhaven that is not commonly known among Western students. We do not know if the money designated to the program is enough to help all students in need and for how long it can sustain them. Hunger on college campuses has increased in the past years because of increased tuition costs. Students are no longer able to work and go to school simultaneously and be able to afford school, housing and food costs on a part time work paycheck. Students who are struggling to feed themselves may end up sacrificing their ability to perform in school because of reasons such as working full time and have inadequate time for study, hunger levels make it hard to focus on school work, and low energy levels due to an inability to access healthy options that are typically more expensive. There is never a bad time to address

student hunger, the sooner we can recognize the problem, the sooner we can start creating solutions.

Project Description

A food bank is a place that supplies people in need and satellite locations called food pantries. With a food pantry, there are two main styles that are important to distinguish. Some pantries operate in a “market” style, where people are able to pick out the items that they wish to bring home. Others operate as a kit-style: staff and volunteers put together boxes of organized meals and snacks for people to pick up, which makes for an efficient system for students to access.

After receiving and analyzing the data with the help of Beth Hartsoch, we knew there was an obvious need. This issue had to be addressed as soon as possible with an efficient and accessible solution. We looked into the solution of a food pantry, which has been successfully implemented on campuses across the nation. We hoped to work with the space we have, and create a food pantry that would be readily available within winter quarter of 2018. This food pantry would be kit style, providing non-perishable yet nutritious items from the most important food groups. This will be located in Birnam Wood, an on-campus living community.

Case Studies

Seeing that a food pantry solution was a success on other campuses, we researched case studies and interviewed organizations and individuals who created a solution for food security in their community or campus to understand how we could successfully implement it on Western’s campus. These case studies include: Oh SNAP!, Appalachian State University, and College & University Food Bank Alliance. Oh SNAP! at Humboldt State University provides a food pantry, a weekly fresh produce stand, assistance in applying for food stamps, and other resources such as cooking classes. Appalachian State (a peer-institution of Western) provides a food pantry within their Office of Sustainability full of non-perishable items and occasionally fresh, seasonal produce. This is student/volunteer run and donation based. Through researching the solution of a food pantry, we discovered College & University Food Bank Alliance (CUFBA). They have over 200 affiliated schools who have addressed the issue of food insecurity with a food pantry. CUFBA also provides a Food Pantry Toolkit, which was an excellent guide for us throughout our discussion and development of this solution for our campus.

Collaboration with Christian Urcia: The first two quarters of this project, we were working solely with our CSPA group. However, this third quarter, we have decided to collaborate with Christian Urcia. He is a RD at Birnam Wood. Birnam Wood is an on-campus living option that does not require you to have a meal plan. 41% of the students who live in this community were shown to have experienced food insecurity*. With his data collected, he has drawn up a proposal that highlights solutions, partners, locations, operating hours, and equipment needed.

Budget and Funding

We are proposing a budget of \$7,000-10,000 to kickstart this program for one quarter. At the present moment, while we are sure that there is a need for this program on Western's campus, we are unable to project how many people will access the pantry throughout a quarter. With a projected cost of \$10-15 per food kit, we will be able to serve roughly 50 to 100 university members per week throughout the first quarter. Surveys and analysis of pantry use will allow us to create a more refined budget for upcoming quarters.

Other budget considerations would be advertising costs (roughly \$100 per quarter), a long-term rental of a laptop to keep track of data, and eventually a sustained paid coordinator position.

We are currently pursuing partnerships with local grocery stores to donate or provide discounted food. In addition, we have a tentative relationship with Aramark on campus to help us source our food at low costs. We are not currently looking for food donations from community members, as we have found from our research of other food pantries that those donations are typically expired or low quality food. In addition, it would increase the amount of volunteer or paid labor necessary to sort through the food and create suitable balanced meal kits, which is something that we are not yet scaled large enough to manage effectively.

We are currently looking into a variety of funding sources. The Residence Hall Association of WWU, the Associated Students of WWU, the Sustainable Action Fund, Americorps, and in-kind funds are all options that we are pursuing. We hope to have funds secured by early winter quarter.

Sustainability

We recognize that the members currently working on this issue will not be at Western's campus indefinitely. We propose a paid position be created that would allow for data collecting, kit assembly, volunteer coordination, as well as keeping in contact with

Aramark and our sponsors, and working towards growing and developing the food pantry as need dictates.

With regards to sustainability for funding, we are applying for a Sustainable Action Fund grant, which would potentially support the next 3 years of this project. In that time, we will be able to collect data to show the effectiveness and necessity of this service to Western, and will then pursue long-term funding from the university.

Monitoring and Evaluation

When one visits the pantry, they will swipe their Western ID or alternate ID, preferably (this would be a card issued to new pantry members that is not connected to their Western account). The amount of people who visit as well as how frequently an individual visits will be monitored. This data will be anonymous and will help us to project quarterly costs for the pantry.

We will track the effectiveness, efficiency, impact and relevance of the food pantry by continuously conducting surveys to the community that uses the pantry. These surveys will be voluntary and anonymous, and will ask questions on a broad spectrum, ranging from food quality and type to hours of operation. This way we can have tighter relationships with the people who need our service, and cater to their needs most effectively. We will measure these questions through a quarterly summary.

Conclusion

It is important to understand that this issue should be addressed and taken care of as soon as possible. Not only providing for students, but also making sure they are getting healthy, substantial food/meals is crucial for an effective plan. We found that a food pantry is the most practical and accessible solution for students, faculty and staff facing this issue. We have teamed up with Christian Urcia and Aramark dining services and are currently finding the best source of funding for this project so we can bring this plan into fruition and have a long-lasting way to cater to students in need of food.

Appendices

Data

- Survey

Survey Research Questions For WWU Office of Survey Research

Submitted by Jade Flores, Sydney Gildersleeve, and Katelyn Notestine

Initial Questions, in the last 30 days

Options: Almost always/Often/Sometimes/Seldom/Almost never

1. I worried my food would run out before I got money to buy more
2. The food I bought just didn't last, and I didn't have money for more
3. I couldn't afford to eat a balanced meal

Follow-up Questions, in the last 30 days

From above respondents "Often" and "Almost always" only

Options: Almost always/Often/Sometimes/Seldom/Almost never

1. Did you ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?
2. Did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money?
3. Were you ever hungry but you didn't eat because there wasn't enough money for food?
4. Did you lose weight because there wasn't enough money for food?
5. Did you ever not eat for a whole day because there wasn't enough money for food?

All questions from the resource: Hunger on Campus: The Challenge of Food Insecurity for College Students, October 2016, Pages 13-17: examples of survey questions and results

http://studentsagainsthunger.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Hunger_On_Campus.pdf

- **Survey Data**

- <https://wp.wvu.edu/osr/2017/10/18/nutrition-and-food-security-spring-2017/>

Food Pantry Location: Birnam Wood

