

Addressing Food Insecurity at ULV: Best Practices and Future Planning



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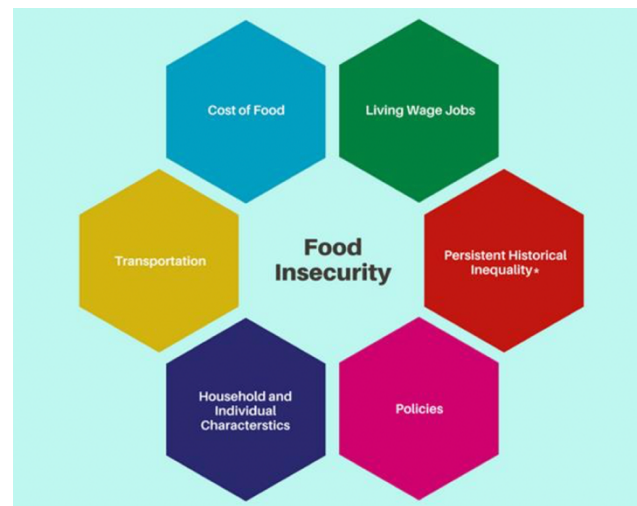
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Introduction

Leo Food Pantry was established in 2016 at the University of La Verne to address food insecurity and alleviate student hunger on campus. Currently, the pantry hosts one distribution a month serving around 60-70 students. The pantry uses a distribution model, in which students can choose from either a standard bag or vegetarian bag. Leo Food Pantry's goal this academic year is to research the best practices that can help improve the pantry and expand resources to better serve students facing food insecurity in the future.

What is food insecurity and why is it a concern?

Food insecurity is the lack of availability or access to a sufficient quantity of food or adequate quality food.^{1,2} This is due to socio-economic or geographical barriers, such as lack of affordable housing, systemic racism, or unemployment. Studies have found that the rates of food insecurity prevalence on campus is 20% to over 50%.⁴ This rate is higher than the 12% rate found in the entire population of United States.⁴ Therefore, food insecurity is a growing issue, not only in the United States but on campus community as well. Food insecurity is associated with adverse effects on students' physical wellbeing, such as obesity and malnourishment.² Other consequences of food insecurity on students are poorer cognitive function, poorer academic performance, and elevated levels of depression, anxiety, and stress.²



(Rada, 2018)

Food insecurity is an obstacle to academic success

Among food-insecure UC Santa Cruz undergraduates:



FELT STRESSED,
DEPRESSED, OR
UPSET



WERE UNABLE TO
CONCENTRATE ON
THEIR WORK



HAD INCONSISTENT
ACCESS TO
HOUSING OR WERE
HOMELESS



DO NOT PERCEIVE
THE CAMPUS
CLIMATE AS
INCLUSIVE

Food-insecure students also have significant family (66%) and work (45%) responsibilities that reduce time for their studies.

(White, 2019)

Methods

1. Conducted interviews with other universities to learn about their food pantry's best practices. This consisted of two rounds of interviews. Colleges and smaller private universities in Southern California were interviewed in the first round of interviews, followed by the second round of interviews with larger universities across California.
2. Outreached to other companies, agencies, and community food pantries to increase resources for the food pantry.
3. Researched grants to increase the food pantry's funding.

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2. Coffino, J.A., Spoor, S.P., Drach, R.D., Holmes, J.M. (2020). Food insecurity among graduate students: prevalence and association with depression, anxiety, and stress. *Public Health Nutrition*, 24(7), 1889-1894. doi:10.1017/S1368890020002001

3. *Hunger and food insecurity*. (n.d.). Feeding America. <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/food-insecurity>

4. Freudenberg, N., Goldrick-Rah, S., Poppendieck, J. (2019). College students and SNAP: The new face of food insecurity in the United States. *American Journal of Public Health*, 109(12), 1652-1658. DOI: 10.2105/AJPH.2019.30.5332

5. Rada, R. (2018, February). CalFresh: The most vital anti-hunger intervention in San Diego County. *Congressional Hunger Center*. https://www.hungercenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Rada_CalFresh_The_Most_Vital_Anti-Hunger_Intervention-1.pdf

6. White, D. (2019, October). Food for all. *UC Santa Cruz Magazine*. <https://magazine.ucsc.edu/2019/10/food-for-all/>

Results

The research conducted resulted in creating a Best Practices Manual for campus stakeholders to evaluate, which concludes the following components:

- Literature review
- Eligible grants that can be explored
- Community partnerships that can be established
- Short-term and long-term recommendations on improving the food pantry



Examples of Recommendations

Short-term recommendations (next academic year)

Tabling events to increase visibility (e.g., club fairs)

Partner with local food banks to increase distribution frequency to twice a month

Create campus partnerships (e.g., dorms or campus clubs)

Apply to grants to increase funding

Update inventory to be more culturally exclusive (e.g., halal, kosher)

Long-term recommendations (2 – 3 years)

Grocery model to increase autonomy, remove stigma, and reduce food waste

Create partnerships with regional food banks to increase distribution to every week (e.g., LA Regional Food Bank)

Provide perishable food items (e.g., fruits and vegetables)

Offer nutrition classes

Create a partnership with CalFresh

Conclusion

The Leo Food Pantry will utilize the Best Practices Manual to improve pantry operations and advocate for systemic change on campus. Several barriers were identified during the research (such as financial limitations, staffing constraints, and space availability). Universities, lawmakers, and stakeholders should evaluate these barriers so students experiencing food insecurity do not go hungry.