

Food Scarcity on Salem State Campus

Promoting Student Use of Campus Food Pantry

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Introduction

- **Mission:** “The mission of the pantry is to eradicate hunger in the Salem community by providing residents in need with nutritious foods in an atmosphere of dignity and respect” (The Salem Pantry ,n.d.,para.1).
- The Salem Food Pantry has been serving the community of Salem since 1991, over 30 years (The Salem Pantry, n.d.).
- The Salem Food Pantry works collaboratively with the Greater Boston Food Bank. This is where most of Salem Food Pantry’s food is obtained.
- During the beginning of COVID-19, there was a significant demand for food in the Salem area. Twenty-six thousand pounds of food was distributed to about seven hundred families (The Salem Pantry, n.d.).
- Salem State University has an on-campus pantry, that is stocked with non-perishable food items, toiletries, and feminine products.

Related Literature

“Post-secondary students at community college and universities in the United States (US) experience food insecurity (FI) at an estimated rate of 41% according to one systematic review. Food Security is generally defined as a shortcoming in access to enough food for an active, healthy, life” (Nikolaus, Ellison, & Nickols-Richardson, 2020, para 1).

“Food security status was measured using the validated 10-question U.S. Adult Food Security Survey Model (AFSSM), which measures food security status over the previous 12 months. The questions assess the respondent’s experience of the components of food insecurity, including anxiety about food resources, decreased variety and quality of foods in the diet, decreased quantity of food available, and disruptions to eating patterns and intake” (Riddle, Niles, & Nickerson, 2020, para 9).

The results of the research done at the University of Vermont concluded that the students affected most by food scarcity were undergraduate, first-generation, off-campus, and students of color (Riddle, Niles, & Nickerson, 2020).

“Low-income households have a much higher prevalence of food insecurity than their nonpoor counterparts. In 2016, 31.6 percent of households with incomes below 185 percent of the Federal poverty line were food insecure. The Federal poverty line for a family of four (two adults and two children) in 2016 was \$24,339. These low-income households constituted the majority of food-insecure households, 58.9 percent” (Rabbit, Coleman-Jensen, & Gregory, 2017, para 8).

Objective

- To discover reasons why students aren’t using the on-campus pantry
- To spread awareness of the food pantry
- To market the pantry to be more welcoming to all students.

Materials and Methods

- Obtained data from Salem State database on the student’s usage of the on-campus pantry during October 2020.
- Created an anonymous survey distributed to Salem State students via Facebook to understand what would make a student more likely to utilize the on-campus pantry.

Survey:

1. Do you worry about obtaining food?
2. Salem State University has an on-campus food pantry, located inside the Ellison Campus Center, free to students that is stocked with non-perishable items. Have you visited the pantry before?
3. If you have visited the pantry before, how many times have you been?
4. If you have been to the pantry, what changes would you like to see, that would make you want to visit the pantry more often?
 - More Food Options
 - Fresh Produce
 - Flexible Hours of Operation
 - Social Media Updates
5. If you haven’t visited the on-campus pantry, explain your reasons for not visiting?
6. What kind of food would you like to see at the pantry? (Pasta, canned veggies, rice, cereal, etc).

- Observed the responses from the survey to determine any changes that need to be made.
- Created a drop-off plan so that students are being notified when their requested food is delivered to the pantry.

Results

This data was provided by the SSU IT department. This offers a starting point to determine the number of students currently using the pantry.

On-Campus Pantry: October 2020	
New Students	13
Repeat Students	14
Residential Students	23
Commuter Students	4
Total Users	27

Survey Responses:

1. Do you worry about obtaining food?

- 14- No
- 20- Yes

2. Salem State University has an on-campus food pantry, located inside the Ellison Campus Center, free to students that is stocked with non-perishable items. Have you visited the pantry before?

- 17-No
- 17-Yes

3. If you have visited the pantry before, how many times have you been?

- 1 time – 8
- 2 times- 4
- 3 times- 3
- 4+ times- 2

4. If you have been to the pantry, what changes would you like to see, that would make you want to visit the pantry more often?

More Food Options= 10
Fresh Produce = 6
Flexible Hours of Operation = 0
Social Media Updates = 18

5. If you haven’t visited the on-campus pantry, explain your reasons for not visiting.

- Didn’t know there was one
- Didn’t want to take away from others who need it

6. What kind of food would you like to see at the pantry? (Pasta, canned veggies, rice, cereal, etc).

- Fresh Produce
- Cereal with shelf-stable milk
- Pasta/ Mac& Cheese
- Spices

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Conclusions

- According to the survey responses, there were several changes needed to make the pantry more welcoming for all students. Students would like to see more pasta items and cereal items. Pasta and cereal are easy meals that a college student can prepare effortlessly. Students would like to see fresh produce, which is a bit of a challenge being that there isn’t any refrigeration in the on-campus pantry.
- To incorporate fresh produce in our drop-offs to the pantry, students will be notified on the Facebook page that fresh produce and other food items are being dropped off. This allows for students to get the fresh produce before it goes bad.
- A check list is included in the plan to assure that wanted food items are delivered. Also, part of the plan is to have the person dropping off the food take a picture and upload a post to the Facebook account. This social media update will allow students to know when food is available at the pantry. By including a picture, the student(s) can see if they want items before heading over to the pantry.

SSU On-Campus Drop-off Plan

Date:

Are these foods included in drop-off box?

- Pasta (4-5 boxes)
- Macaroni & Cheese (4-5 boxes)
- Rice (3-5 bags)
- Canned veggies (8-10 cans)
- Tomato Sauce (4-5 cans)
- Cereal (10-12 bags)
- Shelf-Stable Milk (5-6 cartons)
- Fresh Produce (apples, oranges, plums, mangos)
- Spices (if any)

After Drop-Off

- Picture was taken of the drop-off food box
- Picture and notice has been uploaded to FB page

References

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