



CAMPUS FOOD PANTRIES: INSIGHTS FROM A NATIONAL SURVEY

SEPTEMBER 28, 2018

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For College, Community, and Justice

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TOP FIVE TAKEAWAYS

- This is the first-ever national survey of campus food pantries, with 262 participating institutions, 217 of which currently operate pantries.
- Most campus pantries have a designated space on campus, serve exclusively the on-campus community, and are run by staff, students, and faculty.
- Very few campus pantries have sizable budgets, but most employ some paid staff, often undergraduate or graduate students, and volunteers provide additional support.
- Awareness of campus pantries may be limited because common outreach strategies are informal, but barriers to support are low—just 5% of campus pantries require proof of financial need.
- The most common challenges faced by campus pantries are insufficient funding, food, and volunteers.



Many colleges offer demonstrations at pantries to teach students cooking skills.

FORWARD

Food insecurity is widespread on American college campuses. Students do not have enough food to feed themselves and sometimes their families as well. We created the College and University Food Bank Alliance (CUFBA) to provide support, training, and resources to campus-based food banks/pantries and other food-insecurity initiatives that primarily serve students. Starting with a membership roll of just 15 schools in 2012, CUFBA has grown to more than 650 members.

Building a pantry program at a college often means addressing bureaucratic and systemic challenges unique to college campuses. But this is a nascent field and we know too little about how campus pantries operate and affect students. It is one thing to understand how colleges run pantry programs; it is another to

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know if those programs actually work. We facilitated this report to deepen our understanding of campus pantries by exploring the many ways that these programs are being implemented. By learning how they are structured, resourced, and managed, we can build capacity in the field that will facilitate the growth of campus pantries while laying a foundation for ongoing research into their efficacy.

This report demonstrates that significant financial, physical, and personnel resources are being invested in campus pantries. The CUFBA members who participated in this survey helped to shed needed light on the work involved in operating pantries and offered valuable insight into how to improve them. For that we are grateful.

Serving the Nation's Students
College & University
FOODBANK
 **Alliance**

INTRODUCTION



Volunteers help pack and prepare foods at the Fresno State Student Cupboard.

Current estimates suggest that as many as half of American undergraduates experience food insecurity while pursuing college degrees.¹ Defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as the “limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, or the ability to acquire such foods in a socially acceptable manner,” food insecurity is associated with reduced academic performance and lower rates of degree completion.² Growing recognition that food insecurity must therefore be addressed in order to promote both educational attainment and individual well-being has led to the creation of hundreds of food pantries located on college campuses around the nation.³

How are these food pantries organized and implemented? What types of food and other resources do they provide to students? What do they cost to operate and who staffs them? Answers to these pragmatic questions are needed by practitioners seeking to set up or improve pantries. They also provide necessary context for efforts to help students access affordable food on campus. For example, it appears that only a small fraction of food-insecure students utilize campus pantries.⁴ The reasons they give for not doing so include social stigma, lack of clear information on rules or policies, and inconvenient hours. Addressing these concerns requires first understanding how campus food pantries deal with privacy, what rules they employ, and what hours they typically operate.

This report describes the results of the first national survey of campus food pantries. A collaboration between the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice and the College and University Food Bank Alliance (CUFBA), the membership organization for campus pantries, yielded information from 217 pantries in 40 states. By examining the relationship between resources—both financial and physical—and programmatic decisions, it provides the most comprehensive picture to date of how colleges and universities are implementing food pantries.

By describing how campus food pantries currently operate, this report supports existing efforts and identifies areas for improvement. But it also contributes to a broader conversation about the most effective approaches to addressing food insecurity among college students. Food pantries are a charitable, short-term response to an epidemic of poverty confronting undergraduates, an epidemic created by the new economics of college.⁵ They provide valuable short-term assistance when students run out of food, but are not a long-term solution to the broader systemic problem of hunger. Addressing those challenges requires leveraging the energy around campus pantries to create more robust policies and programs that focus on prevention.

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1. Broton, K. A., & Goldrick-Rab, S. (2017). Going without: An exploration of food and housing insecurity among undergraduates. *Educational Researcher*, 47(2), 121-133; Goldrick-Rab, S., Richardson, J., & Hernandez, A. (2017). *Hungry and homeless in college: Results from a national study of basic needs insecurity in higher education*. Madison, WI: Wisconsin HOPE Lab; Nazmi, A., Martinez, S., Byrd, A., & Ritch, L. (2018). *A systematic review of food insecurity among US students in higher education*. *Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition*, 1-16.
 2. Philips, E., McDaniel, A., & Croft, A. (2018). *Food insecurity and academic disruption among college students*. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*.
 3. Callahan, C. (2018, Feb. 16). Choosing between books or food; Esch, M. (2018, Apr. 18). *Free food for thought: Campus food pantries proliferate*; Lobosco, K. (2018, Jan. 3). New York governor wants food pantries at every state college; Palocko, J. (2018, Jan. 8). *Growing number of Pennsylvania colleges adding food pantries for hungry students*. *The Morning Call*.
 4. El Zein, A., Mathews, A., House, L., & Shelnutt, K. (2018). *Why are hungry college students not seeking help?* Predictors of and barriers to using an on-campus food pantry. *Nutrients*, 10(9), 1163; Goldrick-Rab, S., Richardson, J., Schneider, J., Hernandez, A., & Cady, C. (2018). *Still hungry and homeless in college*. Madison, WI: Wisconsin HOPE Lab; King, J. A. (2017). *Food insecurity among college students - Exploring the predictors of food assistance resource use*. Unpublished manuscript.
 5. Poppendieck, J. (1998). *Sweet charity? Emergency food and the end of entitlement*. New York, NY: Viking Penguin

BACKGROUND

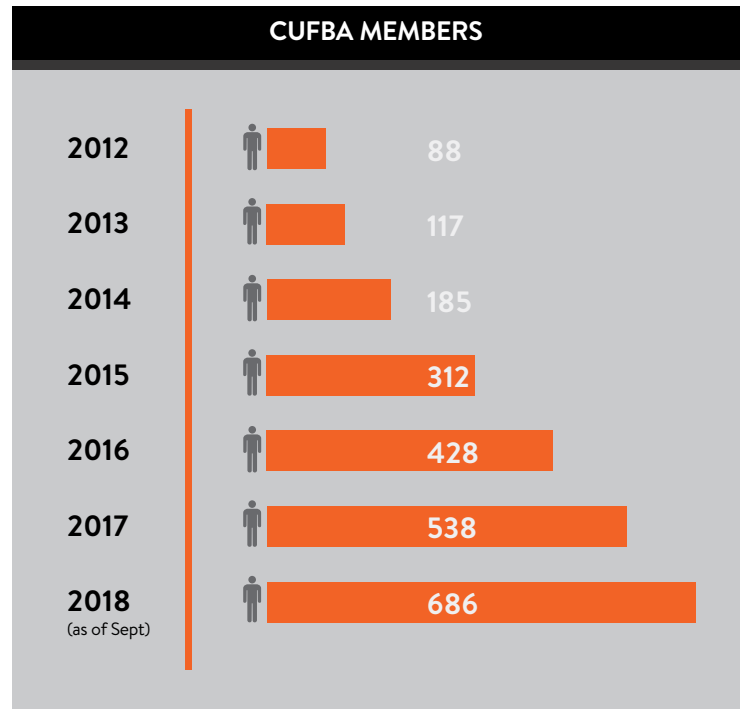
This report describes the practices of campus food pantries who are CUFBA members. As defined by CUFBA, a campus pantry is a program designed specifically to deliver food (that has not been pre-prepared) to students who are experiencing food insecurity. Membership in CUFBA is free and the organization is increasingly prominent. In order to join CUFBA, a program simply commits to learning about student food insecurity with the intention of developing a campus pantry, meaning not all CUFBA members currently have functioning pantries.

CUFBA food pantries are in various stages of development, from conceptual to operational. Most CUFBA pantries are located on campus, but a few are located off campus with a dedicated program and partnership to ensure that students can access food. CUFBA members receive support in the form of free one-on-one phone and email consultation from a designated point person on the CUFBA team. CUFBA also offers paid technical assistance in the form of campus visits, and produces a monthly newsletter and website offering tips and tools to help colleges understand food insecurity and how to address it.

While there is increasingly robust literature describing the prevalence and correlates of food insecurity among college students, very little of it addresses how campus food pantries function.⁶ An extensive search for the latter yielded only a few examples, all but one focusing on single institutions. They also tend to describe students' perspectives on pantries, rather than reporting information obtained from those operating the pantries. For example, a team in Ohio described how one college assessed need and then partnered to build a pantry.⁷ In another study, researchers surveyed students at the University of Florida and assessed the correlation between awareness of and use of food pantries.⁸

The most comprehensive multi-institutional examination of campus pantries is a report from the Working Students Success Network (WSSN), a group of 19 colleges that recently concluded a three-year

In 2012, there were only 88 CUFBA members, but as of September 2018, the organization included 686 members.



study called *Achieving the Dream*.⁹ The report discusses the experiences of 13 WSSN member colleges in Arkansas, California, Virginia, and Washington, which operate food pantries. The authors describe why food pantries are needed, highlight three main considerations for starting a pantry—space, staffing, and sustainability—and emphasize the role of food pantries as entry points to additional services and counseling. They draw many useful lessons from case studies of the 13 institutions, however it is unclear whether the experiences of those colleges extend to the hundreds of other campus pantries around the nation.

METHODOLOGY

All campus food pantries who were members of CUFBA as of September 2017 (N=530) were invited to participate in an electronic survey. Recruitment was conducted via email and phone, and participation was encouraged by CUFBA leadership and incentivized with a raffle for two \$500 prizes. The survey included up to 155 questions (depending on whether a campus had a pantry) and took approximately 20 minutes to complete if the campus had a food pantry. The final response rate was 49%, with 262 unique colleges and universities represented.¹⁰

Table 1 describes the characteristics of CUBFA colleges and universities by whether the institution responded to our survey. For the most part, the campuses that participated are fairly similar to those that did not respond. For example, both subsets are mainly public, offer four-year degree programs, serve a sizable percentage of undergraduate students receiving the federal Pell Grant, and are somewhat evenly distributed regionally across the U.S. One notable difference between survey participants and non-participants is school size; half of the survey participants are campuses that serve fewer than 10,000 undergraduates compared with 62% of non-survey participants.

6. Broton & Goldrick-Rab (2017); Nazmi et al. (2018).

7. Twill, S. E., Bergdahl, J., & Fensler, R. (2016). Partnering to build a pantry: A university campus responds to student food insecurity. *Journal of Poverty*, 20(3), 340-358.

8. El Zein et al. (2018).

9. Lenhart, C., & Petty, J. (2017). *Addressing food insecurity on campus: Establishing food pantries at community colleges and connecting students to wider services*. Silver Spring, MD: Working Students Success Network.

10. This figure excludes multiple entries for a single institution (only the most recent response is used) and entries from institutions not included in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

Of respondents, 83% (N=217) reported operating a functional pantry currently serving students. Table 2 describes the characteristics of the colleges and universities who reported housing functional campus food pantries. Among those 217 pantries, 68% are located at four-year colleges and universities, with the remainder located at two-year colleges. The vast majority (84%) are located at public institutions, however 16% of pantries at four-year institutions are located at private, nonprofit colleges and universities. These 217 pantries are distributed in 40 states and 199 cities, with fairly even representation by geographic region (Figure 1). However, there are higher concentrations of responding campus pantries in larger states with sizable undergraduate populations, including California, Texas, Michigan, New York, and Pennsylvania.

The responding food pantries are at institutions of varying sizes. About a quarter of the pantries at four-year colleges and universities are at very large institutions, serving at least 20,000 undergraduates, while 38% of those at two-year institutions are on small campuses serving fewer than 5,000 undergraduates. The percentage of first-time, full-time undergraduate students receiving the federal Pell Grant on campuses with food pantries ranges from 11% to 92%, although the median at four-year institutions (38%) is much lower than at two-year institutions (52%).

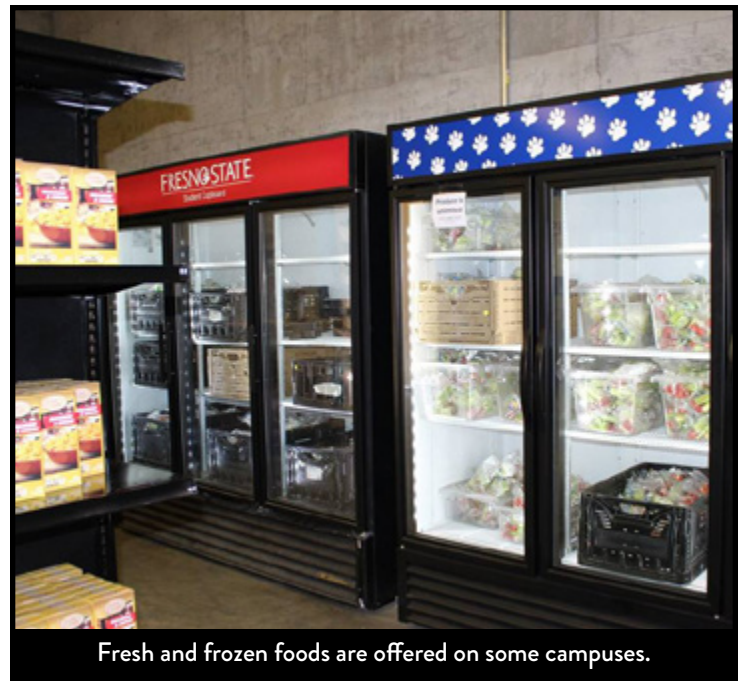


Table 1: Characteristics of Institutions by Survey Participation

	NON PARTICIPANTS	PARTICIPANTS
N	253	262
LEVEL		
Four-Year	69%	68%
Two-Year	31%	32%
CONTROL		
Public	82%	85%
Private, nonprofit	18%	14%
Private, for-profit	0%	1%
CENSUS REGION		
Northeast	20%	24%
Midwest	23%	22%
South	32%	28%
West	25%	27%
UNDERGRADUATE POPULATION		
Less than 5,000	32%	28%
5,000 - 9,999	30%	22%
10,000 - 19,999	21%	29%
20,000 or more	17%	20%
Median percent of undergraduate students awarded Pell Grants	41%	43%

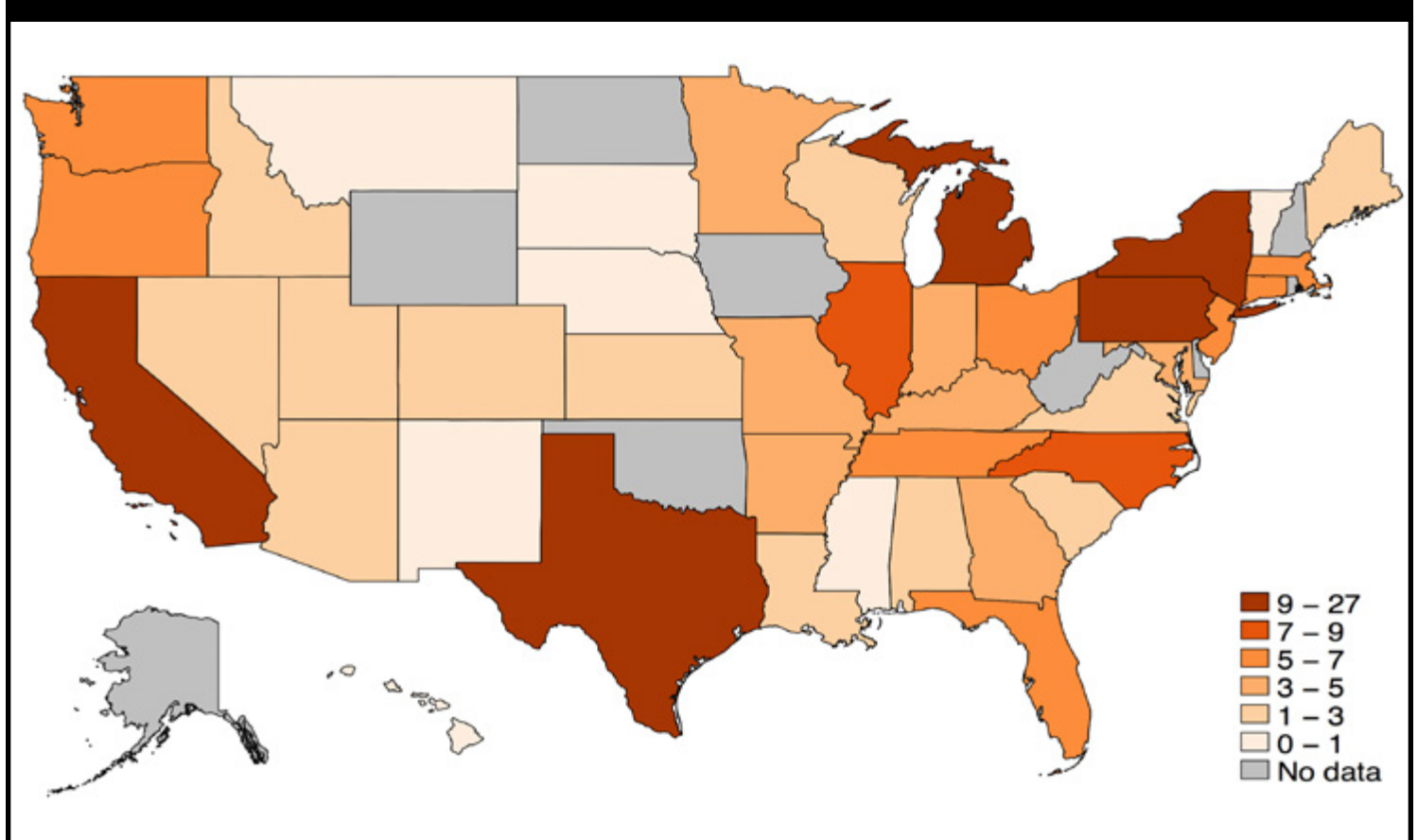
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Table 2: Characteristics of Institutions with Campus Pantries

	FOUR YEAR COLLEGE	TWO YEAR COLLEGE
N	146	71
CONTROL		
Public	84%	96%
Private, nonprofit	16%	1%
Private, for-profit	0%	3%
CENSUS REGION		
Northeast	19%	34%
Midwest	25%	17%
South	29%	30%
West	27%	20%
UNDERGRADUATE POPULATION		
Less than 5,000	20%	38%
5,000 - 9,999	22%	24%
10,000 - 19,999	32%	27%
20,000 or more	26%	11%
Median percent of undergraduate students awarded Pell Grants	38%	52%

Census region derived from the U.S. Census Bureau (2018) Census regions United States

Figure 1: Map of Surveyed Institutions with Campus Pantries



OPENING A CAMPUS PANTRY

Most CUFBA members who responded to the survey are currently operating a food pantry on a college campus. Students were involved in—and many times led—the creation of 70% of those pantries, while 82% benefitted from staff involvement, 67% involved administrators, and 54% involved faculty. Community partners supported the creation of about two in five campus pantries (Figure 2).

Most (55%) pantries opened relatively quickly, within a year of the first meeting deciding to pursue a pantry. However, it took between one and two years to open 39% of the pantries, and three or more years to open 6% (Figure 3).

Among the survey respondents who do not currently operate a pantry, nearly all plan to open one. Of the 41 colleges that plan to open a pantry, 93% said that the pantry is at least somewhat likely to open within one year.

The campus pantry at the University of California-Merced (UC-Merced) provides an example of how pantry operations can grow and evolve over time. UC-Merced is the fastest growing campus in its system and also has the highest percentage of students from underrepresented ethnic groups, low-income families, and families whose parents did not attend college. When staff members led by the Office of Student Life & Civic Leadership first created a pantry in 2012, it was housed off campus in partnership with Merced Community College and the Merced Food Bank. Students were encouraged to visit the pantry for distributions, and the university provided a shuttle to help them travel nearly 4.5 miles to get there. Over time, an examination of usage patterns and in particular an investigation into the under-utilization of the pantry revealed the importance of having a location on campus. As a way to make the pantry more accessible to students they piloted an on-campus pop-up pantry with distributions twice a month, in addition to continuing the pantry off campus.

In 2017-2018, those pop-up pantries served 1,530 students, or nearly one-fifth of students on campus, including graduate students. This high rate of utilization fueled a decision by campus leadership to create a permanent, dedicated space for a primary pantry for students. That new pantry is under construction, located in campus housing, and supported by a Basic Needs Coordinator who helps students connect to public benefits programs including the food pantry. This work is financially supported (to the tune of more than \$400,000) by the University of California system and the state-funded Hunger Free Campus Initiative.

Figure 2: Parties Involved in the Creation of Campus Pantries

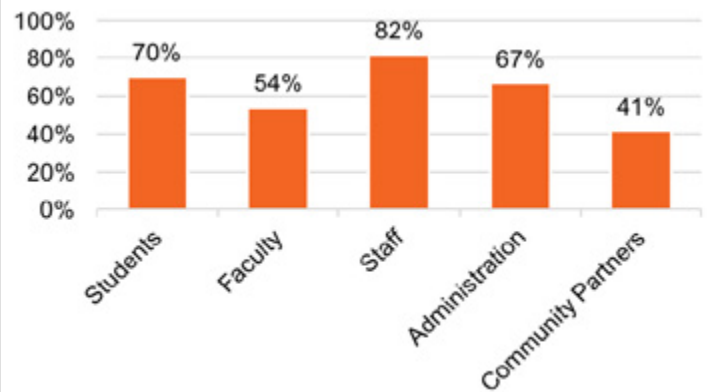
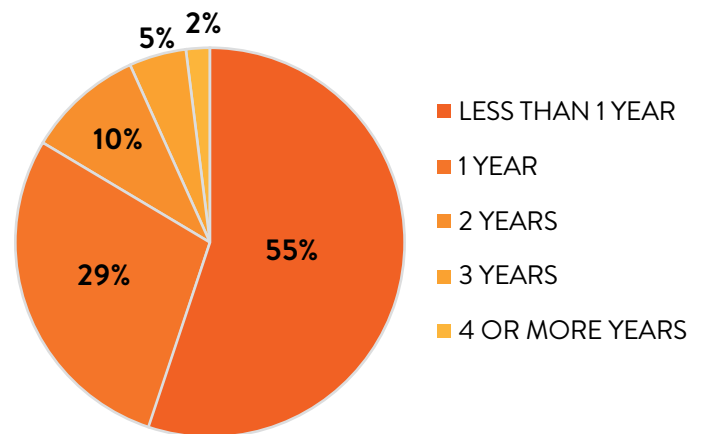


Figure 3: Length of Time Required to Open Campus Pantries



Pop-up pantries like the one at UC Merced are a less common but effective approach to distributing food on campus.

FINANCING, LOCATING, AND STOCKING A CAMPUS PANTRY

Very few campus pantries outside of California's public universities benefit from the type of financial support that UC-Merced has received. Many pantries had difficulty estimating their budgets, at least in part because they rely on in-kind contributions and donations, rather than enjoying a designated allocation of funding. The 118 campus pantries who offered specific budgetary information reported annual budgets averaging just more than \$15,000 per year. There is substantial variation around that mean, with a standard deviation of almost \$39,000 and a range from \$0 to \$300,000 (Figure 4).

Operating efficiently with few resources is sometimes easier when a campus pantry partners with a nonprofit organization. With a fiscal sponsor, campus pantries can collect tax-exempt pantry donations and receive food from their local community food bank. More than half of the responding campus pantries have such a nonprofit partner, and of those, most (65%) work with their campus foundation. Campus foundations are strong partners for campus pantries partly because they have aligned procedures for legal, financial, and operating purposes. Other common nonprofit partners include hunger relief organizations (16%) and religious organizations (7%). Campus pantries that are not working with a nonprofit partner frequently report that they are operating to their satisfaction without one. However, some (just under 10%) have faced challenges establishing such partnerships because of requirements such as the need to serve the broader off-campus community. Just 6% of campus pantries are open to off-campus community members.

The physical setup and contents of campus pantries affects how they serve students and whether they can serve the non-college community. For example, the WSSN report suggests that "most pantries only need a relatively small space of 180 to 300 square feet."¹¹ The vast majority (92%) of pantries responding to the CUFBA survey have dedicated space on campus, but the size of that space varies. The most common size of a dedicated campus pantry space is between 100 and 300 square feet (Figure 5). Just under one-third occupy less than 100 square feet, while one-quarter have 300 square feet or more. Only five campus pantries pay rent for a dedicated space.

Pantries without dedicated space tend to be newer and in operation for only a year or two, but institutional size does not appear to correlate with provision of space. Almost all of the campus pantries without dedicated space are at medium to large institutions. Additional space for extra food and supplies is helpful to pantries, especially those with an established flow of donations. More than half (54%) of campus pantries have overflow space, and among those pantries, 50% have less than 100 square feet of space for that purpose, 31% have 100 to 300 square feet, and the rest have more than 300 square feet.

Many sources provide food for campus pantries. Most pantries receive community donations, but they are also supported by local food banks and businesses. Nearly one in four pantries receive food at no cost from their local food bank. Half of the pantries also purchase food at either discount or market rates (Figure 6).

Figure 4: Distribution of Annual Budgets for Campus Pantries

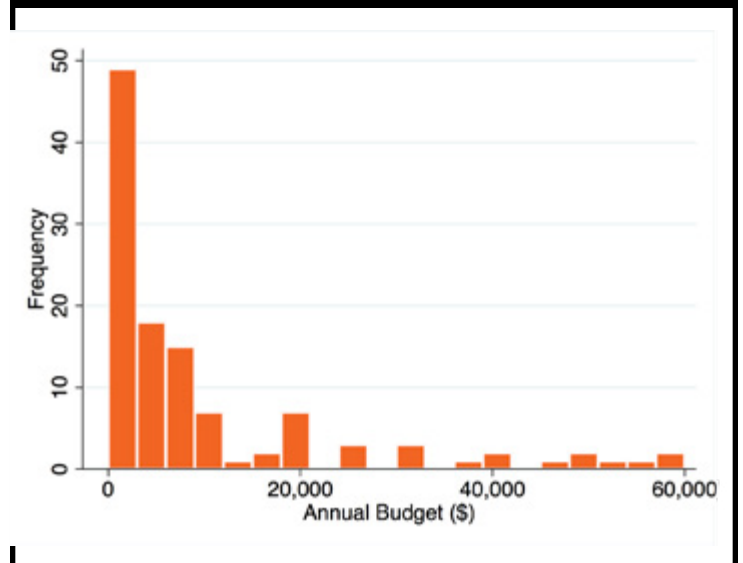
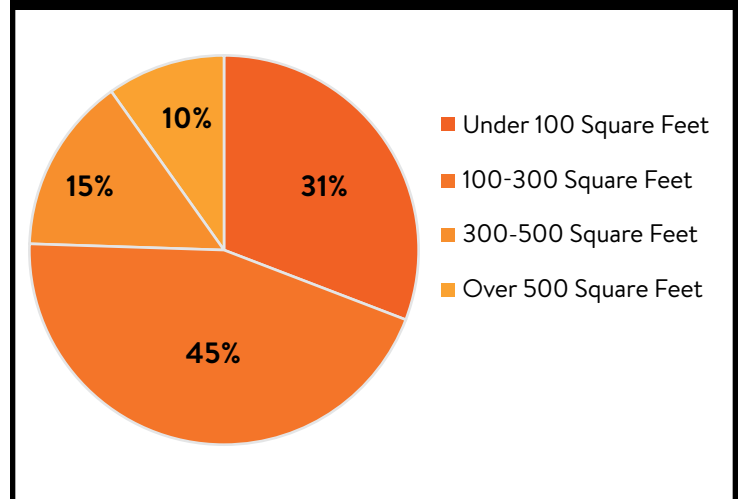


Figure 5: Size of Dedicated Space for Campus Pantries

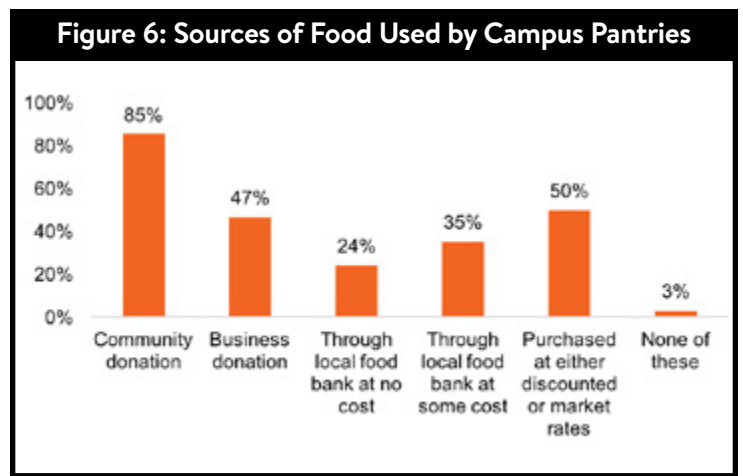


At the University of Nevada-Reno, students play a major role in financing, locating, and stocking the Pack Provisions food pantry. Student activities fees, approved annually by a student board, fund the pantry operating budget and pay salaried staff. The student government provides space for the pantry and vehicles used to transport food to campus. Students staff the pantry to ensure the comfort of their peers using the program in a by students/for students approach.

In contrast, at Fresno State, the coordinator of the Food Security Project is paid by the university, and the rest of the budget for the Student Cupboard comes from private donors. They have been very successful fundraising, garnering approximately \$150,000 annually for each of the past four years. Through positive relationships with partners in donor development, university advancement, and the

11. See Lenhart & Petty (2017).

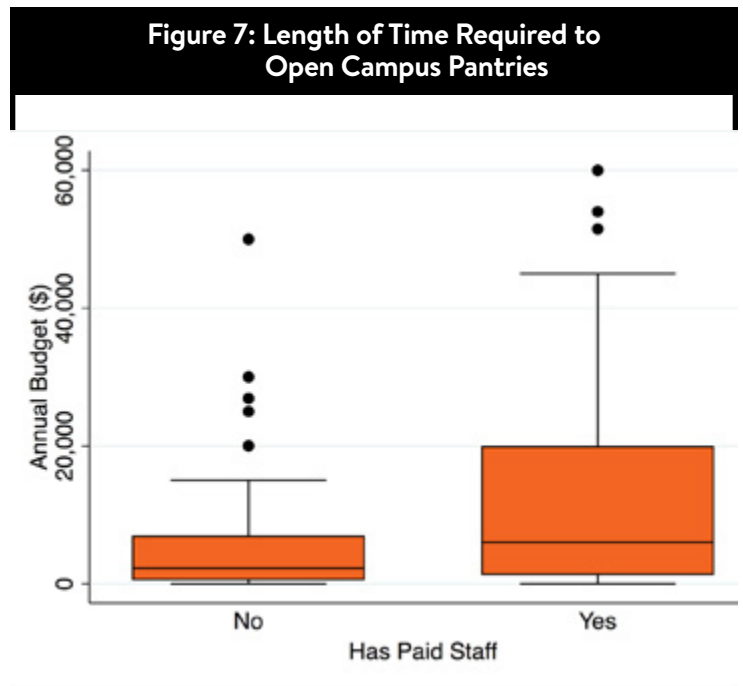
president’s office, they secure large donations and leverage those with additional money raised through matching programs. This includes the “March Match Up” campaign, an annual month-long push to bring in donations using an online crowdfunding platform. The 2018 crowdfunding campaign raised \$150,044 from 286 donors. In addition to these funds, Fresno State has secured money through a Cal Fresh grant to do outreach and help students apply for that food stamp program. The university also benefits from California’s Hunger Free Campus initiative, and has used those dollars to renovate their space and build capacity for new services, such a class series called “How to Adult – Learning Beyond the Classroom,” where students learn skills including cooking and budgeting. Fresno State has even succeeded in building an endowment of more than \$75,000 to sustain this work.



WORKING AT A CAMPUS PANTRY

A diverse array of stakeholders manages campus pantries. At 38% of campus pantries, the dean of student’s office or the division of student affairs is in charge, while student government or student organizations operate 21% of pantries. Other common managing offices include service learning and health and wellness, while management from an academic department or counseling office, sustainability office, or religious organization is less common. Advisory committees oversee the work of 46% of campus pantries.

Just under half of campus pantries (49%) pay someone to staff the pantry when it is open. The proportion of pantries with paid staff is the same at four-year and two-year institutions, but institutions with paid staff have larger budgets than institutions without paid staff (Figure 7). At two-thirds of the pantries with paid staff, those staff are undergraduate or graduate students. Only 15% of campus pantries have used or currently use the AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America) program for staffing needs. For staff whose job description includes managing the food pantry, nearly one in four dedicate more than half of their time to the pantry, while 29% dedicate from 26-50% of their time to the pantry, and the remainder spend less one-quarter of their time. It is therefore unsurprising that 88% of campus pantries utilize volunteers, even when they have paid staff.



Campus Cupboard at Missouri Western State University relies heavily on faculty and students as well as volunteers and goodwill. A professor in the music department runs the pantry, which contributes to that professor’s tenure portfolio. Campus Greek organizations regularly host food drives to stock pantry shelves and supplement a winter holiday food drive spearheaded by the university president. Faculty also contribute to the pantry through food drives and cash donations, and unpaid pantry staff help to direct donations by sharing wish lists for specific food. Donations and volunteer hours are also regularly tracked and managed.

In contrast, the Campus Harvest Food Pantry at Durham Technical Community College is overseen by the Volunteer Services Coordinator

in their Center for College and Community Service. The pantry began with an AmeriCorps VISTA grant to bring in a staff member for one year dedicated to building capacity for the program. Many classes on campus require service hours as part of their course requirements, and targeting volunteer outreach to these students often means that volunteer slots at the pantry are quickly filled each semester. The program also has a strong partnership with the Retired Senior Volunteer Program, whose individuals help with pantry stocking and food distribution, as well as offer cooking demonstrations. In 2017-2018, the pantry benefitted from 474 volunteer hours, which helped them to serve 1,570 students and distribute 20,968 pounds of food.

SUPPORTING STUDENTS AT CAMPUS PANTRIES

As growing numbers of students attend college year-round and spend considerable time on campus, even if they do not live there, the provision of affordable food on campus has become especially important. Most (52%) campus pantries recognize this need and are open more than 30 hours per week. Most are also open more than one day a week, with 32% open every weekday and 14% open daily including weekends (Figure 8).

When students come to campus pantries, they can usually pick out whatever food they need, the practice at 87% of the CUFBA campuses surveyed. Just 13% of campus pantries only offer students pre-bagged or boxed food or have some other arrangement. However, 88% of campus pantries limit the amount of food a student can take at one time. Very few campus pantries (5%) use a mobile app to facilitate food distribution or help students indicate what food they want.

A significant share (41%) of pantries distribute less than 5,000 pounds of food annually, but almost one-fifth (21%) distribute more than 20,000 pounds per year (Figure 9). Given the variety of food sources, some of which cost very little, there is no clear relationship between a pantry's budget and the amount of food it distributes (Figure 10). The amount of food distributed also appears unrelated to whether a campus pantry has a partnership with a local food bank, employs a paid staff, or restricts the amount of food students can take at one time.

Most campus pantries offer more than food to students. Fully 88% offer personal hygiene products or other supplies or home goods. These most commonly include toiletries, feminine hygiene products, toilet paper, can openers, utensils, and dishes. At the University of Nevada-Reno, the Pack Pantry offers grocery cards and a food swipe donation program that provides students with access to on-campus dining. They stock shampoo, soap, and other toiletries, and have partnered with the distribution center at a major online retailer so that the pantry can receive undamaged household goods that have been returned.

There are many ways that students can learn about the existence of campus pantries, but among the approaches pantries are currently using, informal mechanisms such as word-of-mouth and referrals are the most common. Just over two-thirds of campus pantries have a website and 63% utilize social media to connect to students.

- **Word-of-mouth**
- **Referrals**
- **Fliers**
- **Websites**
- **Social media**

More formal mechanisms, such as putting information about the campus pantry on the syllabus as part of a "basic needs security statement" may be useful but do not yet appear widely used.¹²

Figure 8: Frequency and Duration of Operation for Campus Pantries

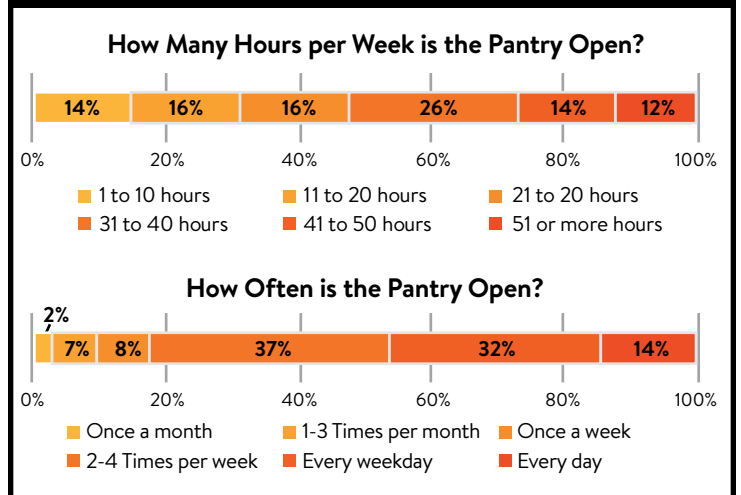


Figure 9: Pounds of Food Distributed Annually by Campus Pantries

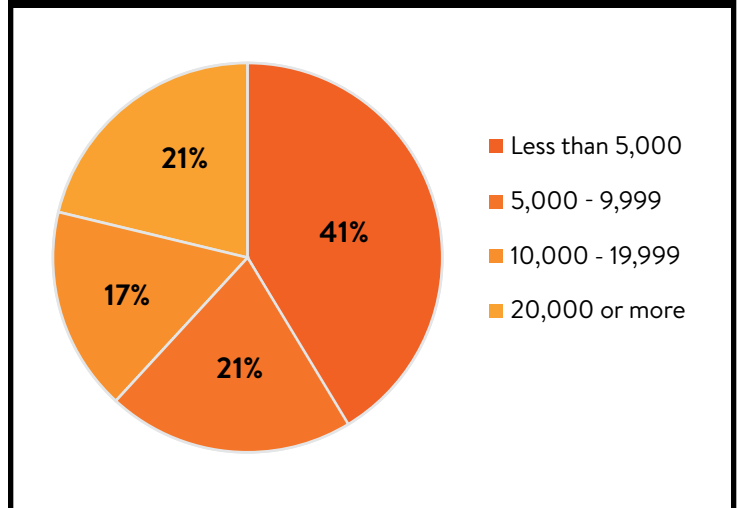
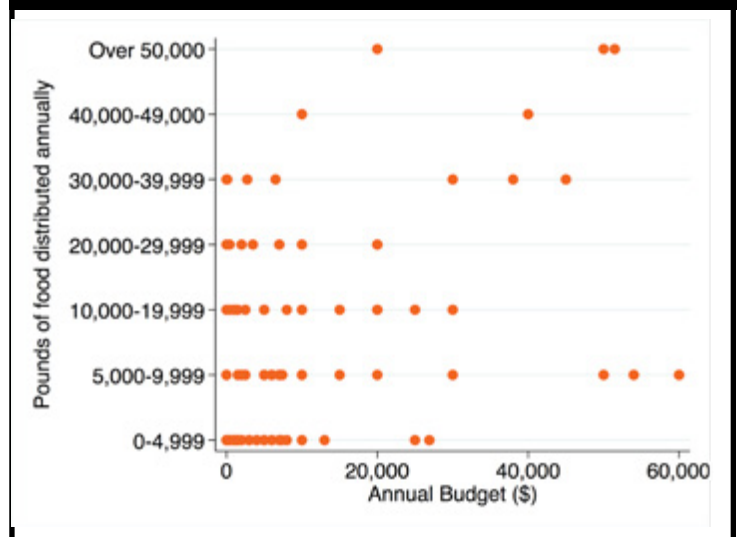


Figure 10: Pounds of Food Distributed Annually by Campus Pantries, by Budget



12. Goldrick-Rab, S. (2017, Aug. 7). Basic needs security and the syllabus [Blog post].

Just over half (56%) of campus pantries exclusively serve students, while 44% are also open to faculty and staff. Only a handful are open to the public or serve people who are not part of the institution. However, barriers to entry are often quite minimal. Just five percent of campus pantries require proof of financial need to access support. Moreover, 94% of campus pantries report that the space is accessible to persons with disabilities and 84% say that the space can be reached via public transportation.

There is debate over the extent to which privacy is important for encouraging students to utilize campus pantries. Some, like the authors of the WSSN report, suggest that pantries should be “fairly private” to protect students’ dignity. Other practitioners, including those at Amarillo College, find that locating the food pantry in a prominent area on campus and even enclosing it in glass can help normalize utilization of pantries and promote a “culture of caring.”¹³ Ensuring that a staff member is not only present but also speaks with students while they visit the pantry can help reveal other challenges and identify opportunities for greater support.

Indeed, 92% of CUFBA respondents have someone at the pantry when it is open to students, and most of those individuals are paid to be there. The location of a pantry also contributes to how private it is, and while 92% of campus pantries report having a designated space on campus, 24% of all pantries are not private (Figure 11). Again, the direction of influence of privacy on students is unclear.

The number of students utilizing campus pantries is highly variable. About one in five pantries serves fewer than 100 students per year, while 15% serve 1,000 or more (Figure 12). Most (80%) pantries market the pantry regularly to the entire student population, and thus that marketing practice does not appear related to the number of students served (though specific marketing practices may vary in effectiveness). Nor does the number of hours the pantry is open seem to drive how many students are served. Perhaps most surprisingly, larger budgets are not correlated with the number of students served (Figure 13).

SAMPLE BASIC NEEDS SECURITY STATEMENT

Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support.

Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable them to provide any resources that they may possess.

Source: Goldrick-Rab, S. (2017).

Figure 11: Degree of Privacy of Campus Pantries

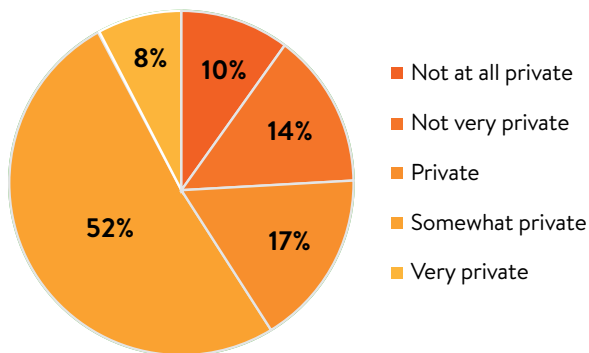


Figure 13: Number of Students Served at Campus Pantries, by Budget

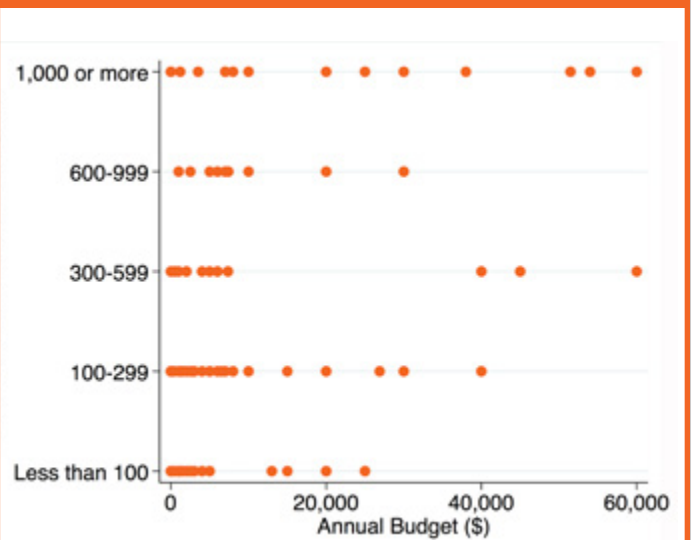
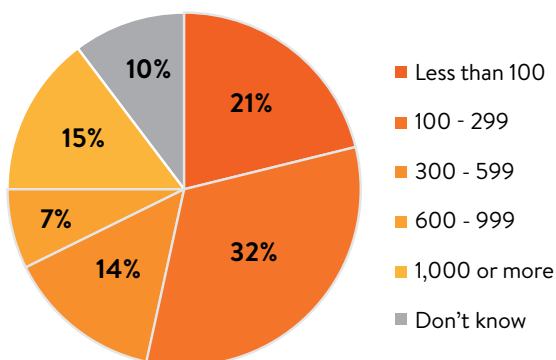


Figure 12: Number of Students Served Campus Pantries



CAMPUS PANTRIES AS ENTRY POINTS

Offering a campus food pantry is a signal to students that a college cares about their health and well-being, and recognizes that struggles with food insecurity are common. As such, it is an opportunity to connect with students and help them access additional support. The WSSN report emphasizes this point and suggests that pantries connect students to financial services in particular. Among the CUFBA member pantries responding to the survey, 66% indicate that they refer students to off-campus resources, 29% support students seeking to access SNAP (food stamp) benefits, and 26% offer counseling.

Collecting and examining data on students' needs can be important to extending the resources available to them. Just under two-

thirds (64%) of campus pantries collect data on students using the pantry. However, only 39% are aware of any effort to measure food insecurity on their campus. When asked about their priorities for the coming year, just 9% of campus pantries said that doing campus-wide education on poverty among college students was something they planned to work on, and only 8% said that they were working to expand services beyond providing food. Instead, the most common priority of campus pantries is ensuring that their food sources and funding streams are sustainable. They also seek to improve marketing of their pantries to students and find better space to operate. These priorities reflect their main challenges: 40% of pantries said that they have insufficient funds, 25% report having insufficient food, and 17% said they lack volunteers.

CONCLUSION

Until now, colleges and universities seeking to open a campus food pantry had very little information on how these pantries are commonly established, operated, and supported. Thanks to the participation of 262 members of the College and University Food Bank Alliance, this report reveals both commonalities and differences in how pantries are run.

However, there remains very little evidence as to which campus pantry approaches are most effective at supporting students' academics, health, and well-being. While it is possible to conclude that one approach is more common than another, it is not possible to conclude that one is preferable. Reaching those conclusions will require more research and also more contextualization of campus pantries in the economics facing students on particular campuses.

ABOUT US

The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice, based at Temple University in Philadelphia, is home to an action research team using rigorous research to drive innovative practice, evidence-based policymaking, and effective communications about the strengths and challenges facing #RealCollege students.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank the following individuals for contributing to this survey and report: Wayne Agnew, Alison Bowman, Sonal Chauhan, William Keaton, Peter Kinsley, Sarah Levine, Brandon Mathews, Jennifer McGuire, and Nate Smith-Tyge. We also appreciate the assistance of all CUFBA member institutions.



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