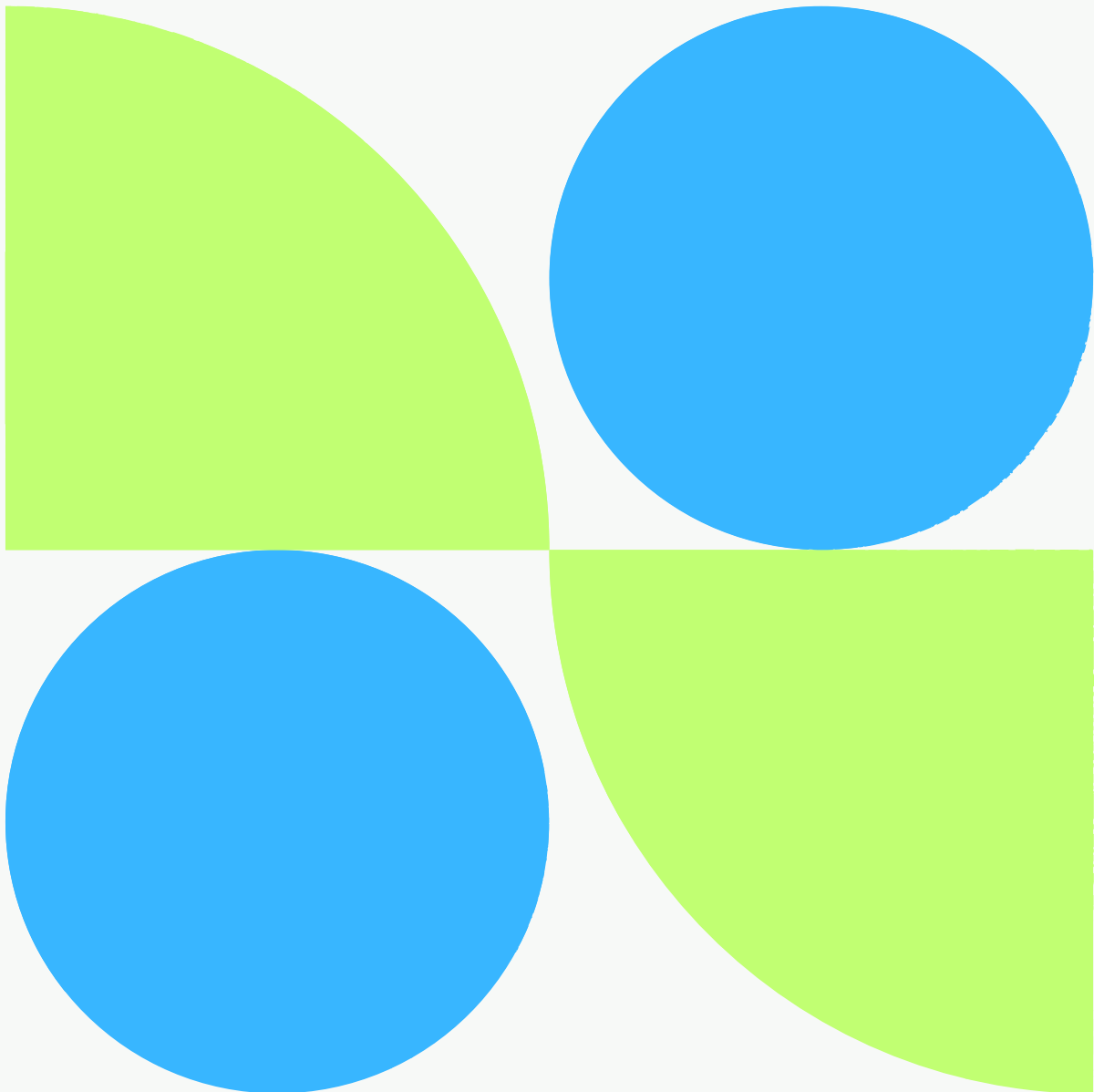


Feast or Famine: An Analysis of the Oxymoron of Food Insecurity on the Oklahoma State University Campus



Introduction

Food insecurity on college campuses is a critical issue that affects the physical and mental well-being of countless students. As the cost of higher education continues to rise, many students find themselves grappling with inaccessibility to nutritious food, leading to adverse consequences for their overall health and academic success. Within the expanse of Oklahoma State University's campus, food resource initiatives like Pete's Pantry to Twenty Something have been implemented, where food is available yet inaccessible. This project explores the problem of food insecurity at Oklahoma State University, with a particular emphasis on the challenges of inaccessibility and the mental strain it imposes on students who are unable to eat well.

Defining Food Insecurity

Commencing ourselves to the food insecurity crisis, we must rewind the pages of history to explore the origins of defining food insecurity. This exploration will subsequently illuminate the various interpretations and perspectives that have evolved around these definitions, shedding light on how society perceives this crucial concept. There were a lot of decisions were made to define insecurity and an important decision is the idea of what food insecurity is at Oklahoma State University.

Mr. Nord's decision to replace "hunger" with "very low food security" in the Department of Agriculture's lexicon sparked controversy within the media and advocacy groups. Some argued that this shift in terminology was an attempt by the conservative Bush administration to downplay the issue of hunger. However, as Jim Weill, the executive director of the Food Research and Action Center, pointed out, the change in language didn't alter the grim reality. He emphasized, "We have got 35 million people according to this report who, no matter what name you put on it, are facing a daily struggle against hunger" (Fisher, 2017, p. 13). This debate over the meaning of the word "hunger" illustrates the power of language in shaping public perception, and it's crucial to recognize that, regardless of terminology, food insecurity remains a pressing issue affecting millions of individuals who struggle to access an adequate and consistent food supply. So, don't you face hunger if you can't access food in non-food secure environments? It doesn't matter if you want to call it mild food insecure, the point is that secure is placed with a prefix "in."

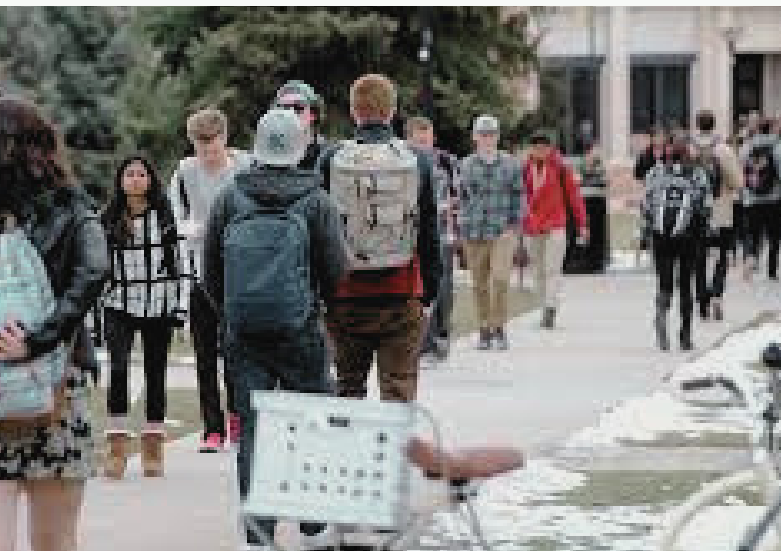
Mark Winne, a seasoned community food security activist, highlights a significant challenge in addressing food insecurity in the United States. He argues that the term "hunger in America" can be misleading because it clashes with the public's preconceived notions of hunger, often associated with images of severe malnutrition in the third world (Fisher, 2017, p. 22). Since the face of hunger in the U.S. doesn't fit the stereotype of children with swollen bellies, its true prevalence tends to be underestimated.

This misperception keeps the issue of food insecurity hidden from the public view. The lack of obvious physical manifestations that align with expectations leads to a common belief that hunger is a problem affecting "others" rather than members of our own communities. Mike Moran of the Oregon Food Bank reinforces this point, noting that people often fail to recognize that even children in free lunch programs, who may have played with their own kids, could be experiencing hunger (Fisher, 2017, p. 22). It relates to the phrase when we waste things: "There are children in Africa." However, your own country includes those hungry children. Maybe it is the children living under bridges, as they are important to the food insecurity cause, but it can also be that student next to you at the 250 chemistry lecture hall.

In essence, the taboo around discussing food insecurity in the United States stems from the public's limited perception of what hunger looks like, causing many to overlook the harsh reality faced by individuals and families within their own communities who struggle to access adequate and consistent food.

Causes of Food Insecurity: In General and Around Campus

This project will primarily focus on the main causes of food insecurity on the Oklahoma State campus. These primarily include scarcity of financial resources, nutrient inadequacy, insufficient awareness across campus, and proximity with an emphasis on safety. Food insecurity is often driven by a scarcity of financial resources, leading to an inability to afford essential nutritional needs. Nutrient inadequacy arises from a lack of access to diverse and sufficient food resources. Additionally, insufficient awareness of going to food-related institutions contributes to the challenge. The proximity at night may limit access to food sources, exacerbating the problem. Furthermore, obstinate definitions and perceptions of food security can hinder effective solutions to address the root causes of this complex issue.



Financial Factor

Tuition has a profound influence on a student's perspective regarding their choices, affiliations, and surroundings. Attaining comprehensive financial literacy isn't always achieved by experiencing the college lifestyle. Students arrive with varying levels of financial knowledge, yet many struggle to grasp the concepts of budgeting and the true worth of a dollar.

OSU = KROGER?

“... hundreds of thousands of company workers relied on food stamps and other public benefits just to get by. The report quoted an employee saying, "Something is wrong when the people who are making this company profitable are the ones deepest in poverty. I literally work at a grocery store and can't afford to eat regularly." Kroger declined to comment on the leak.”

- Forbes

Certainly, the quote I provided about Kroger workers highlights a concerning issue of low wages and food insecurity among employees. Drawing a comparison, it's evident that college students, who are often already struggling with tuition costs and other expenses, face a similar challenge when it comes to affording food. This parallel reveals that even in the outside world, where individuals are employed, there is a stark reality of financial hardship. For college students, who might have limited income sources and are burdened with educational costs, the issue of food insecurity can be even more pronounced, underscoring the pressing need for affordable and accessible food options on college campuses.

Tuition: What does our Tuition Look Like

I could just tell you our tuition prices are costly, however, I can prove it and remember the hassle with other added expenses, such as room and board, food, etc. The majority of students typically enroll in 15 to 18 credit hours per semester. The prices listed below represent the semester fees for each department that a student must cover. It's worth noting that most students are juniors or seniors when paying on a single school department rate. As a result, I will use my schedule to illustrate how costs change and estimate the semester expenses for a student.

My Schedule: 16 hours

Arts and Sciences - 13 hours
Engineering - 1 hour
Education and Human Science - 2 hours

\$7,037.65 (Tuition) w/ University Fees

My Bursar: \$7,057.90

Slight variation, however, it is estimated

To afford tuition, students often work on or near campus, with most on-campus jobs paying around \$10-12 per hour. Assuming a student works 20-30 hours a week, they would earn between \$10- (\$3,466.68-\$5,200) and \$12-(\$4,160-\$6,240) for a 4-month semester. While the ideal is 20-30 hours, many students work 10-15 hours due to time constraints. However, our analysis is based on the assumption of working max hours to cover expenses and tuition, leaving only a modest amount for extra costs on university payment plans. To make ends meet, a student needs a \$32.81 hourly rate for 20 hours a week or \$21.88 for 30 hours, factoring in tuition (~\$7,000), room and board (~\$2,000), and a standard bronze meal plan (~\$1,500) for a 4-month semester. This experimental data highlights that students would need to earn twice as much to achieve a substantial lifestyle.

Department	15 hours	16 hours	17 hours	18 hours
Agriculture	\$7,056.75	\$7,219.10	\$7,381.45	\$7,543.80
Arts and Sciences	\$6,823.50	\$6,970.30	\$7,117.10	\$7,263.90
Business	\$6,988.50	\$7,146.30	\$7,304.10	\$7,461.90
Education/ Human Sciences	\$6,807.75	\$6,953.50	\$7,099.25	\$7,245.00
Engineering	\$7,865.25	\$8,081.50	\$8,297.75	\$8,514.00
Global Studies and Partnerships	\$6,241.50	\$6,349.50	\$6,457.50	\$6,565.00

(OSU -
Tuition
Estimator)

Nutrient Adequacy

Nutrient Adequacy: A balanced diet includes a variety of food groups, such as fruits, vegetables, grains, protein sources, and dairy. This diversity helps ensure that individuals receive essential nutrients like vitamins, minerals, and protein, which are critical for good health (Davidson’s College). On the next two pages, I will be using Davidson College’s standard of nutrient-needed foods and their importance.

Quote Indication	Action	Data / Outcome
<p>Describe the reason why you haven't used or didn't eat that day:</p> <p>“Food choices”</p>	<p>Pete’s Pantry tries to supply diverse foods and as well as basics to cater to the differing cultures of campus. They will take request to help with dietary restrictions and helpful nutrients need by students (Davis).</p>	<p>A diverse diet can make communities more resilient to food supply disruptions, such as construction interference and economic crises. If people rely on a single food source and it becomes unavailable, their food security is at risk. This relates to limiting one source by dormitories and classrooms.</p>
<p>“I haven’t eaten in a day before because I have been busy with all day classes and work straight after.”</p>	<p>It is important that we incorporate our meal like our classes and activities. The awareness of close resources is important as well and will be explore in this project.</p>	<p>Enhancing a productive workforce, especially in a collegiate setting, improves food security. Davidson College explains essential food categories contribute to improved bodily functions. Explore these benefits on the following page.</p>
<p>“I just didn't feel like it.”</p> <p>(Poll) Responses</p>	<p>Finding a friend that can hold you accountable could be a solution. We never have to do it alone.</p>	<p>A balanced diet helps “prevent malnutrition and diet-related health issues.” When people have access to nutritious foods, they are less likely to suffer from nutrient deficiencies and related health problems (Best Colleges).</p>

FOOD OPTIONS

PLACES

Twenty Something and Adams's Markets

IMPORTANCE OF WHY THESE ITEMS ARE IMPORTANT

1. Catering to Varied Dietary Preferences: College campuses accommodate a broad spectrum of students with differing dietary inclinations, encompassing preferences such as “vegetarian, vegan,” gluten-free, and more. The provision of a diverse array of food options ensures that all students can discover meals suitable to their needs (Best Colleges).

2. Celebrating Cultural Richness: College campuses attract students from diverse cultural backgrounds, each steeped in its unique culinary traditions. Offering a wide selection of foods enables students to delve into and appreciate different cuisines, promoting cultural diversity. During my RISE membership, enjoying meals with others’ cultural foods made one’s bond with another grow greatly.

3. Addressing Unique Nutritional Requirements: Students' nutritional needs vary depending on factors like “age, gender,” activity levels, and health considerations. An assorted menu helps guarantee that students can locate foods tailored to their specific nutritional prerequisites (Best Colleges).

Davidson College emphasizes the vital role played by key food categories. Carbohydrates are the body's primary "fuel source." Primary sources searched for these carbohydrates included whole grain bread, varieties of pasta, milk, fruits, and vegetables. Fats are essential for "heart and brain health," causing alleviation of “muscle pain and inflammation.” They also aid in the "transport of fat-soluble vitamins.” Primary food sources for fats include various nuts and tuna. Meanwhile, functional proteins play pivotal roles in bodily functions, ranging from "oxygen transport to facilitating muscle contractions." Lean meat, eggs, chicken, all fish, and shellfish, as well as milk, cheese, cottage cheese, and yogurt, are the primary sources of protein examined. These categories collectively contribute to overall well-being and physiological balance.

4. Warding Off Culinary Monotony: Consuming the same dishes repeatedly can lead to culinary weariness. A multitude of options keeps students engaged and prevents them from growing weary of the available selections. For example, Best Colleges states that “nutritionists [put foods into] subparts based on a vegetable or fruit's color: [It is]to enhance your diet, try to eat something from each of these subgroups daily.” Thus emphasizing the notion of switching up your foods.

6. Fostering Social Bonds and Community: Shared meals hold substantial importance in the college experience. A range of food choices can encourage students to gather, dine together, and cultivate a sense of communal belonging.

FOOD OPTIONS

Foods were taken from Davidson College's Essential Foods Listed through Page and compared to what OSU has on primary food sources

FOOD ITEM	TWENTY SOMETHING	ADAMS'S MARKET
WHOLE GRAIN BREAD	SMALL VARIETY	SMALL VARIETY
PASTAS	VAST VARIETY	VERY FEW
BROWN RICE	RICE, BUT NO BROWN RICE	NONE
FRUITS	DRYING AND DYING, BUT THE PACKAGED IS GOOD	NONE
MILK	ALL KINDS EXCEPT SOY AND ALMONDS	2 WERE ONLY IN THE FRIDGE
BEANS	NONE, MAY BE HIDDEN	NONE
VEGETABLES	FEW AND IN SALADS	NONE
ALMONDS	YES!!!	YES!
PEANUT BUTTER	YES!! ALSO IN PROTEIN PACKS	YES!
TUNA	ONLY IN SANDWICH FORM	ONLY IN SANDWICH FORM
LEAN MEATS	BEEF, HOT LINKS, CHICKEN BREAST, AND LOTS OF SAUSAGE	ONLY LOTS OF SAUSAGE
EGGS	12 PACK AND 2 PACK	YES, ONLY IN 12 PACK

FOOD OPTIONS

Foods were taken from Davidson College's Essential Foods Listed through Page and compared to what OSU has on primary food sources

FOOD ITEM	TWENTY SOMETHING	ADAMS'S MARKET
DELI MEATS	HAM AND TURKEY & 405 DELI	HAM AND TURKEY
FISH	NONE IN MEAT SECTION, BUT SUSHI IS THERE	NONE, BUT HAD ONLY ONE KIND WHEN I WAS THERE
YOGURTS	YES!	DIDNT SEE ANY
COTTAGE CHEESE	NONE, BUT LOTS OF CHEESES	NONE
PROTEIN BARS/TRAIL MIX/NUTS	SO MANY!!!!	NICE SELECTION, BUT NOT AS MUCH AS 20
KRAFT MAC AND CHEESE	YES, BUT DON'T HAVE 2%	YES, BUT DON'T HAVE 2%
POPCORN	BUTTERY AND ONE ORGANIC	ONLY BUTTERED

The primary sources offer a wide range of foods, but dietary restrictions might pose a challenge in finding suitable items. Adams Market is often minimally stocked, not due to the number of students on that side of campus. In the transportation segment of the presentation, I'll discuss methods for individuals with dietary restrictions to access resources.

Transportation

Since we know that food is available, we must find transportation to these resources. The deciding factor isn't just the availability of transportation options but rather the convenience in relation to one's residential proximity. The concern revolves around catching the bus on time and gauging the duration of the commute. While various modes of transportation like biking, college scooters, and buses are at one's disposal for reaching Walmart, the crucial question is whether these options align with the schedules and stops of others. The apprehension of unfamiliar fellow passengers during late-night rides can deter one from opting for public transportation due to safety concerns. Additionally, some students who own cars may still refrain from using them due to reasons such as fuel expenses, the relatively short distance, or limited parking availability. It's worth noting that a subset of students doesn't have access to cars in the first place.

On Campus

The BLACK Routes (10 minute frequency) and ORANGE Routes (15 minute frequency) provide convenient mobility around campus during the full service schedule, Monday through Friday 6:20 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The GOLD NIGHT Route (20 minute frequency) also provides service evenings during the full service schedule from 5:45 p.m. to 10:35 p.m.

Off Campus

Six Routes service the off campus area (GRAY, BLUE, SCARLET, PURPLE, BROWN, and WHITE) during the full service schedule between 6:20 a.m. and 7:15 p.m. (check individual routes for specific service times and frequency). In addition, the GREEN NIGHT Route (45 minute frequency) provides service in the evenings during the full service schedule from 7:00 p.m. to 10:30 p.m.

(Transit Services)

The schedule provided by Oklahoma State University shows the bus schedule that the bus service boasts an impressive timetable, offering a diverse range of operating hours and convenient stops that eliminate the need for students to chase down buses, while also displaying patience by allowing passengers a brief waiting period. Nevertheless, the drawback lies in the occasional misalignment between the bus schedule and individual students' specific timetables, making it essential to plan accordingly.

100%

Transportation is accessible but it isn't
always feasible

**PETE'S
PANTRY**

**SGA
STUDENT
STACHE
NETWORK**

**OUR
DAILY
BREAD**

**PETE'S
EATS**

**ODB
MOBILE**

FOOD

RESOURCES

**SPEARS
BUSINESS
PANTRY**

**FORGOT
YOUR LUNCH
PROGRAM**



**BENNETT
FOOD
PANTRY**

**FIRST
UNITED
METHODIST
CHURCH**

**EDMON
LOW
LIBRARY**



(Oklahoma State University - Campus Map)

Red Zone: 15-25 minutes away from food resources

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1- Visual Arts Annex | 107 - O'Brate Stadium |
| 2 - Excelsior (USIL) | 108 - Michael and Anne |
| 3 - Gary F. Stewart Core Research Facility | 109 -Greenwood Tennis Center |
| 29 - CVM Academic Center | 110 - Track Facility |
| 30 - David L Boren Veterinary Teaching Hospital | 111- Neal Patterson Stadium |
| 31 - Oklahoma Animal Disease Diagnostic Lab | 112 - Sherman E. Smith Training Facility |
| 32 - University Assessment and Testing | 113 - Softball Complex |
| 33 - U.S. Department of Agricultural | 114 - Allie P. Reynold Stadium |
| 34 -Veterinary Medicine Annex | 115 - Gallagher-Iba Arena |
| 72 - Williams Apartments | 116 - Boone-Pickens Stadium |
| 73 - Prosser Apartments | 117 - National Wrestling Hall of Fame and Museum |
| 74 - Payne Ellis Hall | |

Purple Circle: Common Places

- 8 - North Classroom
- 13 - Agriculture North
- 14 - Agriculture
- 15 - Nancy Randolph Davis West
- 16 - Nancy Randolph Davis
- 20 - Physical Science
- 25 - Noble Research Center
- 26 - Engineering North
- 44 - Morrill
- 54 - Old Central
- 55 - McKnight Center for the Performing Arts
- 56 - Micheal and Anne Greenwood School of Music
- 58 - Colvin Recreation Center

Blue Circles: Residential Halls

- | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 71- Demaree Apartments | 81 - Family Resource Center | 91 - Bost Hall |
| 72 - Williams Apartments | 82 - Booker- Stinchcomb Hall | 92 - Bennett Hall |
| 73 - Prosser Apartments | 83 - University Commons North | 93 - Kamm Hall |
| 74 - Payne Ellis Hall | 84 - University Commons West | 94 - Brumley Apartments |
| 75 - McPherson Hall | 85 - University Commons South | 95 - Village Suites C and D |
| 76 - Carreker Hall West | 86 - Davis Hall | 96 -Village Suites E and F |
| 77 - Carreker Hall East | 87 - Sitlington Hall | 97 - Village Suites Fit |
| 78 - Stevens Apartments | 88 - Morsani- Smith Hall | 98 - Village Suites B |
| 79 - Stevens Apartments | 89 - Young Hall | 99- Patchin-Jones Hall |
| 80 - Peterson-Friend Hall | 90 - Zink-Allen | 100 - Wentz Hall |
| | | 101 - Stout Hall |

Red Circle: Primary Food Resources

- 27 - Edmon Low Library
- 28 - Advanced Technology Research Center (ATRC)
- 42 - Business
- 50 - Student Union
- 63 - Adam's Market
- 64 - North Dining Hall
- 66 - Kerr-Drummond

Insufficient Awareness

While conducting my research, I discovered only a handful of dining options on campus. Through my survey, students provided me with previously unknown resources. I am quite an adventurous campus explorer, so I was astonished by these hidden gems I hadn't known about. Now, consider what this means for new freshmen, like myself, who may not venture out much due to classes or activities, or even for busy upperclassmen on the go.

Not-Well Publicized



Since these resources are not easily found online, locating them on campus can be equally challenging. For instance, finding Adams's Market can be a real puzzle, with just one small sign on one of the building.



Busy Schedule



Often, when students are preoccupied, they remain oblivious to the resources around them because they're always rushing. However, programs like Cheap Lunch by CEAT, which only requires a minute to grab, can greatly assist these students as they head to class. Most college departments should integrate such initiatives and clearly mark food resources, possibly avoiding the term "food pantry" to make students feel more at ease and connected with their peers. You might wonder where the funding would come from. It should be a part of the department's budget since a department can't exist without students.

Insufficient Awareness

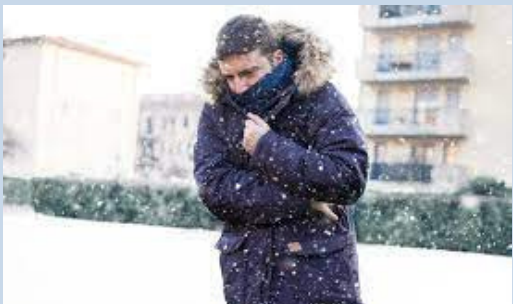
(Continued)

Fatigue



While proximity matters, after long study sessions, walking can feel burdensome for most students. Establishing in-dorm food resources, like Bennett Hall's accessible options, would be a welcome addition.

Winter Weather



Another critical factor is the weather. Who wants to trek in the cold to access resources? This underscores the importance of in-dorm supplies, which could be managed by a resident assistant to provide necessary items. The resident assistant should be provided clothing or extra income.

Mental Strain

The connection between food insecurity and mental health is evident in the increased prevalence of anxiety and depression among students facing low food security. Research indicates that those grappling with food insecurity are at a significantly higher risk, with a “four to fivefold increase in the likelihood of experiencing depression” when compared to their peers who have consistent access to nutritious meals (ADC). This underscores the profound impact of food insecurity on the psychological well-being of individuals, particularly students, as it exacerbates the vulnerability to disorders and diminishes overall mental health.

01

Anxiety and Depression

Food insecurity can lead to both anxiety and depression. The persistent worry about obtaining adequate food for oneself and one's family due to inconsistent access to nutritious meals can contribute to anxiety. This ongoing stress can also worsen or trigger depressive symptoms. Moreover, food insecurity's associated nutritional deficiencies can negatively impact “brain function and mood regulation,” further elevating the risk of depression (Davidson College).

02

Higher Dropout Rates

The amalgamation of stress, diminished concentration, and financial pressures often acts as a significant catalyst for high dropout rates in educational settings. “At least 8% of food-insecure community college students plan to drop out entirely” (ADC). Students, when burdened by these challenges, may begin to feel incapable of succeeding in their current academic environment. However, in their pursuit of relief from these stresses and a fresh avenue towards success.

03

Lower GPA

When an individual experiences insufficient food intake or hunger, their GPA tends to decrease, ranging from “2.0 to 2.49.” Hunger can result in difficulties with concentration, memory, and overall cognitive function, creating additional obstacles to excelling in an educational setting and achieving a higher GPA (ADC).

In such cases, some students might opt for non-traditional educational routes, vocational training, or employment opportunities that provide more immediate financial stability and an escape from the mounting pressures of their previous academic endeavors. While this divergence from the conventional educational trajectory may seem like a detour, it can represent a pragmatic response to their unique circumstances, allowing them to regain a sense of control.

“Every time I eat it makes me feel like I’ve suddenly gained a bunch of weight.” - Anon. Poll

Concerns about weight can have a negative impact on mental health due to factors such as body image issues, societal pressures, and unhealthy behavioral patterns. It's crucial to encourage a positive body image and prioritize holistic well-being over solely focusing on weight. If these worries are affecting your mental health, it's advisable to seek assistance from a mental health professional.

“Sometimes I will delay/skip/eat less of a meal because my class is 10 minutes away.” - Anon. Poll

Skipping meals fluctuations in bodily functions, irritability, and difficulty concentrating. Chronic meal skipping can contribute to nutritional deficiencies, which have been linked to mental health issues like depression and anxiety. Maintaining a regular and balanced diet is important for both physical and mental well-being.

Mental Strain

“[It is] usually time restrictions. Often I will choose a cheaper option to conserve money as well, and I never eat off my meal plan.” - Anon. Poll

Time limitations on meals may lead to stress, unhealthy eating habits, diminished food enjoyment, inadequate nutrition, and cognitive decline, all of which can adversely affect one's mental well-being. Writing in food schedules with your class schedule can emphasize the food importance in your life.

Highlight: Pete's Pantry

Interview with Vanessa Wiebe, Founder of Pete's Pantry

During my research, I had the opportunity to interview Vanessa Wiebe, the founder of Pete's Pantry. She allowed me perspective on the perception of food insecurity, how the foundation was created and progressed, and made me feel the beauty of united humanity.



"I grew up on a farm in the panhandle of Oklahoma so "food" has not only been something that I couldn't live without but it was something I was very closely tied to all of my life. Producing food was our livelihood and something I took for granted until college. My freshman year, **I had a friend who could not afford to eat. They had the smallest meal plan and ran out early into our first semester. I remember being shocked when I was asked if I wouldn't mind bringing some snacks to class every once and a while for them.** This was my first experience with food insecurity, and I started paying more attention to the other students around me and realized it was a pretty common problem. I got involved with the Student Government Association (SGA) and started to make it my mission to do something about it during my 4 years there at OSU. I had the honor of serving as Student Body Vice President my senior year and had multiple discussions with other Big 12 schools about this issue and solutions they were putting in place. **Hearing their creative ideas, sparked the idea of a food pantry and myself, along with a committee of 3 other students, went to the administration and Pete's Pantry went from an idea to reality.**"

- Vanessa Wiebe

Wiebe creates a setting on how many people grow up in a food-secure environment and how it is often in her environment that food isn't available. Oklahoma State University is in Stillwater, a very agricultural-focused community, however, it is food insecure. Wiebe focuses on the experience that shows how taboo food insecurity is and that it is common among her friends and classmates. It sparked her to create Pete's Pantry. She emphasized awareness and education which were very important to my project, as they are the main issues that I have come across. Wiebe emphasizes that food insecurity "affects a person's pride, and they will most times bury it and not share that they are hungry," as many students are scared to tell others that they need help. The emphasis on education about how it isn't shameful to need food is very important. My English teacher, Dr. Seth Wood, really surprised me when he said the question in the first few weeks of class, It had been something I struggled with and at first, I felt ashamed until it became a routine in the classroom. I agree with Wiebe that food insecurity affects the person in a core way.

Could you describe your mission or motivation for becoming a part of Pete's Pantry?

“When I saw food insecurity touch my personal circle of friends, I knew I had to act. I couldn’t just pretend it didn’t exist anymore. **I saw the impact it had on my friend’s health – both physical and mental – the impact on their studies, relationships, etc.** It bled into every area of their life and I wanted to do my part to help other students combat it. **No one should have to go to bed at night hungry.** I also wanted to do something that would outlast my time at OSU and positively impact the university and its future students.”

- Vanessa Wiebe

Wiebe shared her story here above. Food insecurity is closer to home than many realize and it was inspiration to hear that people have a person they feel comfortable asking for help with. In my insufficient awareness section, I emphasized the importance of close locations but also avoiding the term "food pantry" to make students feel more at ease and connected with their peers or express pantry as a safe haven and visiting Pete’s Pantry, the staff made me feel safe. It is really getting students to go there, which it’s important to bring up more and make it common rather than an anomaly.

I wanted to include the struggle of starting Pete’s Pantry as it has many integral parts. Wiebe said the biggest issue was showing the administration that it was an issue by running a study on the percentage of food-insecure students. They presented a summit on their research on “January 19th,” prompting action combatting food insecurity efforts. The progression of the efforts came full circle during her four years. Wiebe expressed, “It wasn’t always easy and sometimes felt like I was fighting a losing battle but sadly the numbers spoke for themselves and thankfully, the university took action.” She truly was a voice for the silence, which is incredible.

Wiebe shared some advice for aspiring leaders who would want to help combat food insecurity:

“Don’t give up and use your voice. It is a hard conversation to have with someone who is personally impacted by it and an even harder issue to tackle. As I said, I worked on it for 4 years and it almost gave up several times. Find other students who have a passion for combating it and lean into them. Work together and work with administrators who can make things move. And always, just try to leave everything better than how you found it.”

Are you ready to help combat food insecurity?

The next step is advancement to the system. Therefore, I decided to fast forward to now by interviewing Cassidy Davis, a graduate student of Basic Needs. Gaining perspective on how Pete’s pantry operates today and the improvements needed today.



After doing the interview, the food insecurity initiative reinforces the ongoing challenge of educating people about defining and addressing food insecurity. My project focuses on this issue, and I'm eager to observe Pete's Pantry's future actions. The audio is above and the transcription will be on the next page. The interview is the hard hitter here, however, I will give a basis.

Davis underscores the importance of education in directing students to accessible resources, given that many students may not recognize their own food insecurity. She emphasizes the necessity of raising awareness about these locations, as their resources can be utilized to alleviate the challenges of college life.

Moreover, Davis points out how Pete's Pantry collaborates with donors like Cactus Care and foundations to assist individuals with dietary restrictions, either through funds or food contributions. Students are encouraged to specify their nutritional needs for personalized support.

Davis also provides innovative suggestions to improve Pete's Pantry, such as expanding the space to accommodate more students, introducing pickup/drop-off delivery options, and making meals more accessible. As Vanessa Wiebe stated, "No one should go to bed hungry."

Transcript of Interview

Speaker 1 - Cassidy Davis

No, that's the easiest. So, and I did one of these earlier as well for probably not someone in your class but another class. So, okay. We'll see if I say the same things or not. Okay.

Speaker 2 - Denay Pendleton

<laugh>. And then the first question I had is, why did you choose Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday for operating Pete's Pantry?

Speaker 1

Yeah. Um, this is only our second year being open and so we're still trying to figure out times as far as that go. Um, we've pretty much always had the Tuesday, Wednesday time, um, from 10 to two last spring we tried doing like extended hours in the afternoon on I think Wednesdays, um, to see if that got more traction than in the morning-ish early afternoon time. And we noticed that numbers were just really low. Um, and so we decided to switch that with a Friday afternoon.

Speaker 1

Okay. Um, just this semester to see if that worked.

And that's been working really well. So a lot of it is just knowing the student schedule, right? So like normally Monday, Wednesday, Friday are the similar classes and Tuesday, Thursday, so we wanted to offer variety and options, students going in between class, work, whatever that looks like. And so we found that having Tuesday and Wednesday at least offers the differences in class.

While it might not appease everyone's work schedule, we know that okay, your classes aren't gonna be exactly the same, um, Tuesday, Thursday versus Monday, Wednesday, Friday.

Speaker 1

So that's why we have the Tuesday, Wednesday and then this semester we're just exploring Friday. But I think it'll be something we keep. So yeah.

Speaker 2

And then the second question I had is what drives

Pete's Pantry and how does it address food insecurity effectively?

Speaker 1

Yeah, what kind of drives us is just the ongoing reminder that hunger exists on a college campus. Um, and food insecurity is very real. And so we wanna try and make our resource accessible. Um, easy to navigate something that anyone who's experiencing life <laugh > could go to and just have um, the ability to have maybe some financial burden lifted off of them. And so that kind of really drives us as well as just hearing people's stories interacting from our resource.

Transcript of Interview

Speaker 1

Right. And so being a graduate assistant for the pantry, um, I get to work with a lot of our clients and get to work with a lot of our volunteers. And so just hearing the story of the impact that our resources had to them, whether that be just a one-time use, uh, biweekly use once a month, whatever that looks like has been a reminder that like a hunger exists and food insecurity exists like on a college campus, but b, that it exists here and that it needs to be addressed. And so I think that is always in the forefront of our mind as we navigate the pantry, why we pick what we pick, um, why we offer specific food and maybe not others thinking of dietary considerations.

Speaker 1

And so, um, just being in touch with the student population and faculty and staff as well that utilize our resource.

Speaker 2

I did actually have a question. Yes. Um, when you said resources, so when you're picking those resources, um, so like people who are like gluten free and then pescatarian and things like that, how do you uh, resource those in throughout

Speaker 1

The week? Yeah, so sometimes it looks like specifically asking for those donations, right? So if someone reaches out, we're very particular with the list of items we ask for. We don't ask for like canned corn and canned green beans 'cause we always get that, which is great, love to have it. Um, but we try to be intentional with when we do donation drives or things of that nature. Um, as far as fresh produce and like fridge and freezer items go, a lot of those come from specific donors. So we work a lot with Cactus Cares, um, or we'll buy it from Walmart, um, very transparently.

Speaker 1

And so we have money set aside, um, from Give Orange and like just various fundings through the foundation. Um, and so we'll use that money to purchase specific things with the intent of hoping to like reach more students. Um, we don't always offer gluten-free or pescatarian. Um, but we try to, when we can, we try to make it as accessible. But we also know that like we might not be able to fill every need of someone, but hopefully we're able just to offset as much as we can so that way when they do have to grocery shop, it's not as much as it would've been.

Speaker 1

Okay.

Transcript of Interview

Speaker 2

Yeah. And then my third question is in what ways do you think Pete's Pantry can be enhanced?

Speaker 1

Yeah, I definitely would love to see just our space grow. Um, I don't know if you've personally visited it, but it is a pretty like small space for what we would love for it to be. Um, and I think the more traction we get, whether that be student involvement and engagement, donors wanting to donate client usage, um, I would love to just see our space shift. Um, I know something we've thrown around in the past is, you know how when you go to Walmart you can like place an order online and then pick it up later. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> and we've talked about doing something like that.

Speaker 1

I think that would be something cool as well, um, for maybe people who can't utilize our resource during hours open. Um, it's just another way to make it more accessible and feasible for a lot of people. Um, I would love to just see more student involvement as well, whether that be through volunteers, student workers, whatever that looks like.

Speaker 1

Um, I know we're not probably supposed to talk about OU this week 'cause it's bed than week, but OU does a really good job with student involvement and just finding really passionate student leaders who make their program run. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. Um, and so watching them as someone in my role, I'm like, wow, I know we have passionate student leaders. I see that with a student's dash. Um, I see it when I talk to people about the resource. Um, I just would love to get them more involved and let them have more of a hand in continuing to like feed the cowboy family and really look out for one another. So I think those are my big things.

Um, I also would love to continue just to do more programming to educate students, faculty, staff on what food insecurity is. Um, I think there's such a stigma around it that the more we eliminate that barrier, um, the better, the more aware people are of the resource, the better. It makes it more, I don't know, friendly, less scary, less intimidating, less shameful. And so I think that's another big component that we've worked a lot on, um, over the last year and a half. But I still think we can grow in.

Speaker 2

Right. And then also when you're talking about your staff, do you actually outreach towards your staff as well? Like the around OSU?

Transcript of Interview

Speaker 1

Um, so we have one student worker right now that, um, is hired by our daily bread and so they work pantry hours. Um, and then we're in the process of hiring a second student worker for the pantry. As far far as volunteers go, it really is just whoever comes to me or Brian and says they're interested. Um, I know in the spring we're gonna try for a much stronger volunteer push just because again, we want that student involvement.

Um, so I'll probably start reaching out to some colleges just seeing if they have students they know of that are interested or in need of volunteer hours or just like talk about food insecurity.

Speaker 1

Right. And so, um, that is definitely an area we're still growing in and navigating. But, um

Speaker 2

Sorry. I, may have missed said that question.

Speaker 1

No, no, no. It's okay.

Speaker 2

I was just asking like your stores like OSU staff, like our teachers and things, do you go and market towards them, like coming to visit the Pantry?

Speaker 1

Yeah, so it's completely open for OSU students, faculty and staff. So as long as you have an OSU Id like you're good to shop. Sorry, I probably misunderstood what you were asking, but Yeah, no, it's definitely accessible for them.

Okay.

Speaker 2

Okay. Yeah. And then my last question is if you could describe your mission or motivation for being part of Pete's Pantry?

Transcript of Interview

Speaker 1

Yeah, absolutely. So as I mentioned, I'm a graduate student right now. And so I am in our educational leadership studies master's program, um, with an emphasis on college student development. It's a fancy title for someone who works at a university just caring for students. So that would include Greek life, um, harvest Leadership Institute, um, student volunteer center, student care and wellbeing, um, anything like that. Student life-wise, campus life. Um, that's what I wanna do. Right. I was very involved in undergrad, um, in our student volunteer center orientation.

Um, giving back to the community was always something that was instilled in me. Um, and when I was an undergrad, I actually tried to start a food pantry on my campus. I didn't go here, I went to a smaller school. Um, but I was friends with a lot of international students and there was always that struggle of finding like just a way to get to a grocery store.

Speaker 1

Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And so I saw firsthand just the problems it had and so tried to start that up and ended up just not working out for whatever reason. But we came up with alternative solutions, right? Like a carpool drive, organizing various events for them so that we could still, um, support them. Um, but just seeing that and then knowing, okay, like I wanna serve in a graduate assistantship where I can learn and grow. Um, when I did the process of applying for just various assistantships, Pete's Pantry and basic needs did stick out to me just because of that involvement in undergrad and like wanting that to happen.

Speaker 1

And so for me it was a no-brainer to apply fortunate enough to be offered it. And now I get to like actually get to do what I wanted to do way back when on a much larger scale.

Speaker 1

So, um, it's been fun to learn and just be a part of that. And um, yeah, I don't know, it's just always been a core value of me to serve others and be empathetic towards people's lived experiences, um, because I know firsthand like life happens and it's hard and money's tight and, um, you know, when you're hungry, like that's all you think about. So, um, yeah. I don't know if that answers your question. No, it kind of all over the place, but <laugh>. Yeah. Yeah. Okay.

Speaker 2

That was my last question. Yay. I really appreciate you meeting with me.



Conclusion

Food insecurity on college campuses is a pressing issue that demands attention and action. To tackle this problem, it is essential for colleges and universities, along with governmental and community organizations, to work together in providing more accessible and affordable food options, increasing awareness, and creating a supportive environment for students. Delving into the heart of this matter not only eases the mental strain on college students but also becomes a catalyst for their flourishing well-being and success, painting an unforeseen path towards a brighter future.

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