

Assessing the Cherry Pantry's First Year of Operation and Planning for the Future

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Education 2082: Equity and Access in Higher Education, Honors Scholars Project

May 6, 2019

Introduction

This research explores how college and university students experience food insecurity and in what ways Temple University works to help its student body. More specifically, it positions Temple University and its efforts to counter food insecurity within the growing body of literature about how to address student food insecurity. This body of literature demonstrates how a lack of access to affordable, nutritional food affects the ability of students to live happy and successful lives as well as negatively impacts their ability to engage with their academic work. It is well documented that students experience food insecurity at disproportionate rates compared to the general population; however, much of food security research still focuses exclusively on the general population. Researchers have also shown that the likelihood and severity of food insecurity is greater for women as well as members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community; however, non-binary people are rarely included in the scope of food security research which makes the prevalence and severity of this phenomenon unknown for these people. These gaps in the research make it more difficult for colleges and universities to design effective support systems for every member of the student body. This leads to a crucial research question: How does Temple University support its food insecure students and what can it learn from the support systems of other higher education institutions to improve its own? The myriad answers to this research question lead to the argument that while the Cherry Pantry is making great strides to develop a connected campus and offset the reality of campus food insecurity, its efforts are hampered by policy decisions outside of its control at the university, state, and national level.

This study begins with a detailed review of the literature establishing the existence and severity of student food insecurity, clarifying the relationship between food insecurity, sexuality, and gender identity, explaining the impact of student food insecurity, and reviewing current strategies and proposed solutions for dealing with the crisis. It then details the findings of semi-structured interviews with Temple community members who directly engage with access work relating to food insecurity. These findings are later positioned within the literature to provide added context for the interviews and help highlight a potential path forward for Temple University. Finally, this study concludes by discussing the limitations of the research as well as by proposing important questions and areas of focus for future research.

Literature Review

1. Establishing Student Food Insecurity

Food insecurity affects millions of American citizens and noncitizens everyday across the United States. The United Nations World Food Programme defines food security as occurring when, “People... have availability and adequate access at all times to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life.”¹ Consequently, when people’s diets are unable to fulfill these requirements of being food secure they are then recognized as being food insecure. The field of food security research has grown over the past few decades to encompass how experiences of food insecurity differ along various demographic markers such as race, gender identity, and parenthood status. A more recent development in the scholarship of food security research is a focus on how students experience and attempt to manage their food insecurity. This

¹ United Nations World Food Programme, 2018.

development is important as it actively fights against regressive stereotypes of students, which enshrine a struggle for basic needs into the undergraduate experience.²

The most crucial finding from this growing field is that 2- and 4-year college students experience food insecurity at far greater rates than the general public does, with more than half of the students in an analysis of four surveys reporting some type of food-access problem or limitation.³ The idea that students face greater levels of food insecurity is a recurring finding of the literature documenting student food insecurity.⁴ This finding is further complicated by mixed evidence “that 2-year college students are statistically more likely to report food insecurity challenges than 4-year college students from low- and moderate-income families...”⁵ Part of the uncertainty regarding if there are differences between the food insecurity experiences of 2- and 4-year college students is attributable to a chronic understudy of community college students and their hardships. A more recent national survey for assessing the basic needs of American University students found “that basic needs insecurities disproportionately affect marginalized students and are associated with long work hours and a higher risk of unemployment.”⁶ All of this work not only helps establish that there is a pressing problem of student food insecurity in the United States, but it also opens doors to new avenues for finding solutions.

2. The Relationship between Food Security, Sexuality, and Gender

Developing an understanding of the underlying determinants of food insecurity has been a core aspect of the scholarly literature, but researchers have also sought to improve our

² Broton and Goldrick-Rab, 2018, 129.

³ Broton and Goldrick-Rab, 2018, 128; Maroto, Snelling, and Linck, 2015, 524.

⁴ Maroto, Snelling, and Linck, 2018, 522; Meza, Altaman, Martinez, and Leung, 2018, 7; Zollinger, Mills, Brandt, Rohleder-Sook, 2018, 70.

⁵ Broton and Goldrick-Rab, 2018, 128.

⁶ Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, Schneider, Hernandez, and Cady, 2018, 3.

collective understanding of how food insecurity affects different demographics. Traditionally, the field has almost exclusively focused on the relationship between food security and female-headed households; however, it is slowly expanding to include members of the LGBTQ community in its scope of study. The bulk of this literature does not specifically study the demographics of student food insecurity, but there is little reason to believe that the relationships the research uncovers between the prevalence of food insecurity and demographic variables are not also applicable to college and university students.

It is a matter of fact that female-headed households are far more vulnerable to food insecurity than male-headed households,⁷ but many studies also introduce further refinements to this central tenet. One instance of this is a study from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) which found that female-headed households are also far more likely to remain in a state of food insecurity as compared to other households in the United States.⁸ Some researchers went further and were able to confirm that female-headed households experience a far greater likelihood of being food insecure when all other characteristics of food insecurity are held constant across demographics.⁹ Others found that female-headed households in rural areas are more likely to suffer from chronic food insecurity than their counterparts in urban areas through a composite index.¹⁰ Scholars also discovered that African American women's experiences with hunger of the body and hunger of the mind are a direct result of food insecurity.

⁷ Chilton and Booth, 2007; Mahadevan and Hoang, 2016; Smith, Rabbit, and Coleman-Jensen, 2017; United States Department of Agriculture, 2003.

⁸ United States Department of Agriculture, 2003.

⁹ Smith, Rabbit, and Coleman-Jensen, 2017.

¹⁰ Mahadevan and Hoang, 2016, 194.

¹¹ This particular study is also the first qualitative research that distinguishes the experiences of African American women from those of other women when pertaining to food insecurity.

The literature of food security now encompasses a more diverse demographic with research geared towards understanding the relationship between being food insecure and being a part of the LGBTQ community. It is now a well-accepted fact that members and households of the LGBT community suffer from greater rates of food insecurity than their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts.¹² There is also considerable variation in the prevalence of food insecurity in the LGBT community. Research has shown that bisexual people participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) with greater frequency than lesbian women or gay men do. In addition, same-sex couples face greater rates of food insecurity than non-lesbian, gay, or bisexual adults or heterosexual couples. The role of gender also plays into this, as women in the LGBT community are far more likely to participate in SNAP or to have not had money for food when compared to men within the community.¹³ One's location in the United States plays a large role in the lived experience of food insecurity because only twenty-one states protect sexual orientation in their state employment non-discrimination laws. States in the Midwest and Mountain regions of America without protections for LGBT people report a slightly greater disadvantage when compared to their non-LGBT counterparts in other regions.¹⁴ The same study also found that, regardless of the existence of state protections, a disproportionate amount of LGBT people report not having enough money to pay for food.¹⁵

¹¹ Chilton and Booth, 2007.

¹² Brown, Romero, and Gates, 2016; Elmore, Yu, and Arikawa, 2018; Gates, 2014; Hasenbush, Flores, Kastanis, Sears, and Gates, 2014.

¹³ Gates, 2014.

¹⁴ Hasenbush, Flores, Kastanis, Sears, and Gates, 2014.

¹⁵ Hasenbush, Flores, Kastanis, Sears, and Gates, 2014.

Within the demographic differences of gender, age, educational attainment, race, and ethnicity, LGBT “individuals and individuals in same-sex couples often report higher rates of food insecurity experiences and SNAP participation than their counterparts.”¹⁶ Furthermore, one study focused exclusively on transgender people found that “over half of transgender respondents were food insecure; they were nearly twice as likely to report being food insecure as non-transgender respondents.”¹⁷

Scholarship concerning non-binary people and their experiences of food insecurity has been slow to get moving, but in recent years headway has been made. The 2018 edition of the Hope Center’s annual survey — the largest national survey assessing the basic needs security of university students in the United States — recorded the prevalence of food-insecurity among non-binary respondents for the first time in the history of the survey. “The results are stark: consistent with prior work, we found females at greater risk of food insecurity than males, but non-binary students were at an even greater risk. For example, among university students, 28% of the male students were food insecure, compared to 37% of female students, and 46% of non-binary students.”¹⁸ This step taken by the Hope Center in recording food-insecurity among the non-binary community is a mark for change as the majority of surveys and research do not yet consider non-binary people in their scope.

3. The Impact of Food Insecurity on Students

Food insecurity has a demonstrable impact on the ability of students to perform to the best of their ability, both inside and outside of the classroom. An early aim of student food security research works to establish a correlation between food insecurity and a lower grade

¹⁶ Brown, Romero, Gates, 2016, 28.

¹⁷ Frazer and Hower, 2015, 10.

¹⁸ Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, Schneider, Hernandez, and Cady, 2018, 19.

point average (GPA), because GPA is often seen as indicative of a student's academic achievement. Many studies struggle to definitively link food insecurity with a lower GPA; however, each successive study does strengthen the association between the two variables. For example, researchers at American University and Morgan State University, found that "food insecure community college students are more likely to be in a lower [GPA] category (2.0-2.49) than the highest GPA category (3.5-4.0)."¹⁹ Their findings are limited to two Maryland community colleges and their results are subject to self-selection bias, but empirical support from other surveys strengthens their claim. This study and other quantitative examinations of the relationship between food insecurity and GPA are further aided by qualitative research, which aims to position the literature's understanding of food insecurity within the viewpoints of the food insecure.

Allowing students to voice their experiences of food insecurity and its effects is important because it provides an opportunity for added context of the phenomenon and recenters the research around those who are actually affected. At the University of California, Berkeley, interviews with student campus food pantry users helped researchers identify seven distinct themes related to the psychosocial effects of food insecurity:

- 1) the stress of food insecurity interfering with daily life, 2) fear of disappointing their family, 3) jealousy or resentment of students in more stable food and financial situations, 4) inability to develop meaningful social relationships, 5) sadness from reflecting on food insecurity, 6) feeling hopeless or undeserving of help, and 7) frustration and anger directed toward the academic institution for not providing enough resources to support students.²⁰

In every interview, participants directly linked how food insecurity contributes to difficulties with handling their academic workload "because of the physical manifestations of food

¹⁹ Maroto, Snelling, and Linck, 2014, 523.

²⁰ Meza, Altaman, Martinez, and Leung, 2018, 1.

insecurity and the mental trade-off between focusing on food and focusing on academics.”²¹

However, the researchers note that “the psychosocial and academic consequences of food insecurity are not mutually distinct: food insecurity can increase psychological distress and worsen mental health, which can directly and indirectly affect academic performance.”²²

Ultimately, these seven themes afford a more comprehensive understanding of how food insecurity is woven into everyday student life and helps reinforce the earlier findings.

Another set of semi-structured interviews explores how household food insecurity transfers across generations, and finds, “through the lens of multigenerational interactions, 4 themes: (1) hunger and violence across generations, (2) disclosure to family and friends, (3) depression and problems with emotional management, and (4) breaking out of intergenerational patterns.”²³ When discussing ways to break out of the intergenerational patterns of food insecurity, many mothers mention the importance of education in breaking the cycle. This has important implications for student food insecurity considering the current context of higher education is staggeringly high costs and a greater prevalence of food insecurity than in the general population. This context, in conjunction with the theme that students suffer from a fear of disclosing their food insecurity to their family, suggests higher education might not only fail to break the intergenerational cycle of hunger, but could actually worsen one’s food insecurity if a student finds themselves separated from their support network. This is why campuses must work to provide a support system that helps students manage food insecurity and its effects as they experience them.

4. Addressing Student Hunger

²¹ Meza, Altaman, Martinez, and Leung, 2018, 6.

²² Meza, Altaman, Martinez, and Leung, 2018, 7.

²³ Chilton, Knowles, and Bloom, 2017, 1.

As researchers continue to study the impact of food insecurity on students, they, in coordination with college and university administrations and student organizations, are also attempting to study and implement potential solutions for the crisis. Some in the academic community and the general public do not see why food insecurity is a pressing issue, which makes asserting that students have a basic right to adequate and nutritional food a contentious claim.²⁴ This is why two researchers worked together to frame the crisis through a rights-based approach, which is an approach that focuses on addressing the social and economic determinants of food insecurity.²⁵ They note four key elements of a rights-based approach, “including (1) government accountability, (2) public participation, (3) an analytic framework that accounts for vulnerability and discrimination, and (4) stronger connections between policies and health outcomes.”²⁶ These elements then lead to more comprehensive, potential solutions for addressing the problem such as: providing tax breaks for supermarkets and food retailers to locate in low-income neighborhoods; funding research in food insecurity interventions; and legislating for safe neighborhoods through safe housing, places for exercise and play, and generous lighting.²⁷ Rights theory struggles to function as a fully independent moral theory, which is why these researchers’ suggestions are strengthened by incorporating the ethics of care. This returns a primacy to people’s personal connections and helps clarify why colleges and universities have a moral responsibility to address student food insecurity. The goal of their research is to reorient national attention and policy towards actually addressing food insecurity, but their argument and solutions are also applicable to collegiate campuses. In fact, their key elements can easily be

²⁴ Cady, and Coca, 2018, 75.

²⁵ Chilton and Rose, 2009, 1203.

²⁶ Chilton and Rose, 2009, 1204.

²⁷ Chilton and Rose, 2009, 1208.

reformulated as (1) administration accountability, (2) student participation, (3) an analytic framework that accounts for vulnerability and discrimination, and (4) stronger connections between student support services and health outcomes. These revised elements then become apparent in the research documenting which strategies have worked or struggled to successfully address food insecurity on individual campuses.²⁸

Campus food pantries are a growing part of the push to address student food insecurity as evidenced by the over 700 colleges and universities that are members of the College and University Food Bank Alliance (CUFBA), an alliance formed in 2012.²⁹ As more and more colleges and universities begin operating campus food pantries, researchers have been better able to understand what makes or breaks their success. A key aspect of a successful food pantry is maintaining records and then incorporating the data into the decision-making process, because “these numbers can be used to write grants or proposals that will bring in additional funding or staffing, make a case for increased hours, or demonstrate the need for more space.”³⁰ Researchers also document the balance that many food pantries try to find between direct purchases of food and hygiene items and individual student donations to keep the pantry stocked. They note, “stocking a pantry with donations does not subject a campus pantry to the rule of the local food bank, and creates a strong sense of community connectivity and pride... [On the other hand,] food supplies from donations are less predictable and shelves can sometimes go empty; in addition, some of the donated food may have expired and could, therefore, be deemed unsuitable.”³¹ This tension between building a sense of student community and keeping a food

²⁸ Cady and White, 2018; Goldrick-Rab, Cady, and Coca, 2018; Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, Schneider, Hernandez, and Cady, 2018, 34-9; Zollinger, Mills, Brandt, and Rohleder-Sook, 2018.

²⁹ College and University Food Bank Alliance, “About Us.”

³⁰ Cady and White, 2018, 77.

³¹ Cady and White, 2018, 77.

pantry fully stocked is an issue best addressed by understanding and reacting to the specific elements of food insecurity on a campus, instead of turning to a one size fits all style of approach.

A national survey of campus food pantries from the Hope Center identifies additional characteristics of them and their struggles. They find “most campus pantries have a designated space on campus, serve exclusively the on-campus community, and are run by staff, students, and faculty,”³² which is important as it offers students the opportunity to connect with other campus resources and students.³³ They also highlight that funding is an issue for most campus pantries, although “most employ some paid staff, often undergraduate or graduate students, and volunteers provide additional support.”³⁴ Despite this, campus pantries often do not require any proof of financial need to access the provided support.³⁵ Additionally, the authors look to the campus pantry at the University of California-Merced as an example of how pantries can grow to accommodate the needs of the student body and how they benefit from formal university and state support. Their pantry grew as it moved from an off-campus location to a newly constructed building in campus housing, which is staffed by a Basic Needs Coordinator “who helps students connect to public benefits programs including the food pantry.”³⁶ This was only possible because of continued support from the university administration and the state of California.

Finally, a master's thesis at the University of Texas Arlington shines light on food resources provided by seven colleges in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, and offers a better understanding of how colleges work to address the needs of their own student body. Four of the

³² Goldrick-Rab, Cady, and Coca, 2018, 2.

³³ Goldrick-Rab, Cady, and Coca, 2018, 12.

³⁴ Goldrick-Rab, Cady, and Coca, 2018, 2.

³⁵ Goldrick-Rab, Cady, and Coca, 2018, 11.

³⁶ Goldrick-Rab, Cady, and Coca, 2018, 7.

colleges utilize food resource sheets which provide information on local non-profits and community services that students can make use of. However, these resource sheets are seen as ineffective by campus informants because students feel “self-conscious about getting resources in the community.”³⁷ On-campus food pantry and emergency meal plan policies vary wildly between colleges in the area as well. Some colleges are only able to offer monthly pop-up pantries and limited emergency meal plans, while others are able to operate with weekly, regularly scheduled hours and emergency meal plans that last for the entire semester.³⁸ Another case study of food insecurity at Fort Hays State University in Kansas finds a campus program, “Fresh Food Fridays”, enhances “awareness of the campus food pantry and its location” by providing students a free fresh food item every Friday.³⁹

Methodology

1. Method

An analysis was first conducted of how student press and outside local press have presented and covered the issue of student food insecurity since 2016. The search was restricted to local Philadelphia news outlets in an attempt to ground the interview questions in Philadelphia’s specific context of food insecurity. A total of 33 articles (n=33) were gathered, read, and coded for common themes. Temple News was used as the representative student press outlet because they are the leading student publication. 27 articles published by Temple News were gathered dating from April 19, 2016 through January 22, 2019. Articles were also gathered from the Philadelphia Inquirer and WHYY, which were published during the same time frame.

³⁷ Pearson, 2018, 25.

³⁸ Pearson, 2018, 25.

³⁹ Zollinger, Mills, Brandt, Rohleder-Sook, 2018, 70.

Articles were found through searches of key terms related to student food insecurity on each individual publication's website.

Interviews were conducted with the primary members of the Temple campus community who engage with food insecurity either in their research or through efforts to address the specific needs of food insecure Temple students. In keeping with ongoing projects at the Hope Center and reports from local news sources, I developed a set of interview questions to understand how Temple University addresses student food insecurity and the state of the Cherry Pantry after its first year of operation. The Cherry Pantry officially opened on February 19, 2018 and initially expected to serve an average of 30 to 50 students a week. However, over the course of its first year the pantry came closer to seeing about 180 students each week.⁴⁰ This rapid growth and its one year anniversary provide a good opportunity to evaluate the first year of operations and re-orient towards the demonstrated need.

A main focus of the interviews was to understand how Temple collects data on food insecurity in order to see how the phenomenon manifests on campus, while also protecting the privacy and dignity of the students who make use of the support service. Another interest was how Temple students organized around the issue of campus food insecurity over the past years. The Cherry Pantry is now the primary focus in the University's attempt to fight food insecurity, but the interviews also looked to identify how attempts go further than a campus pantry and address the intersection of food insecurity, gender identity, and sexuality.

Potential participants were identified through university publications regarding campus food insecurity and then contacted by email to ask for their participation in interviews for a

⁴⁰ Interview with Cherry Pantry Supervisor, March 19, 2019.

research project. Those interviewed include two student workers at the Cherry Pantry as well as two people working in a more supervisory capacity. A research practitioner at the Hope Center was also interviewed to gain additional insight on the bigger picture of student food insecurity (n=5). Requests for interviews were also sent to the Rad Dish Cafe and Challah for Hunger because they regularly donate a portion of their tips and proceeds to the Cherry Pantry, but no response was received. All interviews were conducted in person or through telephone, recorded, and later transcribed. All interviews were confidential so participants' names are withheld and they are instead indicated by their role in addressing student food insecurity.

The interviews with the team at the Cherry Pantry focused on how the team understands their successes and setbacks during their first year of operation, their plans for the upcoming year, who is making use of the pantry, how well connected the Cherry Pantry is to other student support services, and what other programs they have looked to in order to improve their own services. See Appendix A for a complete list of all questions asked during interviews with the Cherry Pantry staff.

The interview with the research practitioner at the Hope Center served as a holistic overview of student food insecurity as well as an investigation into how different colleges and universities are approaching the problem. This then offered a chance to analyze any differences between Temple students' experiences of food insecurity and the experiences of students from other schools. See Appendix B for a complete list of all questions asked during the the interview with the Hope Center.

2. Analysis

After being separated by publication, the news articles were coded for common themes to gain an outside perspective on the Cherry Pantry's development and the process of raising awareness for student food insecurity. This allowed for more focused questions regarding growth in student demand and outreach programs. The news articles also provided important documentation regarding the existence of student support for the Cherry Pantry and an important perspective on how the food drives fared throughout the Pantry's first year of operation. These findings in the articles were also later compared with how successful the participants from the Cherry Pantry felt the various food drives were. Additionally, the news articles were coded to identify if there were any shifts in the way the media covered campus food insecurity and the Cherry Pantry during the three year period that the articles were published. This helped identify the need for interview questions positioning the Cherry Pantry within the broader Temple support network.

The interviews were later coded for themes and common responses between participants to understand how they see Temple's attempts to help food insecure students. These themes were then compared to the existing literature to see if programs for food insecure students at other schools could offer any lessons for Temple as well as to see if any important differences exist between schools.

3. Results

Participants in the study represent the diversity in the efforts to combat campus food insecurity as the responsibilities of each participant vary greatly. However, everyone's close proximity to the Cherry Pantry and campus food insecurity help make three separate, yet interrelated themes become clear. These three themes are: (1) developing a connected campus,

(2) the lived reality of food insecurity at Temple, and (3) solutions and goals. The three principle themes are each made-up of three or four secondary themes, which further highlight the complexity and intricacies of the issue. The secondary themes for developing a connected campus are: improving practices through research, building solidarity and community, and connecting to the campus. The secondary themes for the lived reality of food insecurity at Temple are: stress of student demand, stocking strategies, ensuring the dignity and privacy of students, and experiences of Temple students' food insecurity. And finally, the secondary themes for solutions and goals for food insecurity are: university-level solutions and their reality, national and state-level policy solutions, and the Cherry Pantry's goals.

Developing a Connected Campus

Developing a connected campus emerged as a common theme and concern among all of the participants. Everyone utilizes a slightly different conception of what a connected campus is, but they all see the Cherry Pantry as an opportunity to connect food insecure students with the wider social safety net available through Temple and through the federal and state governments:

For me, the Cherry Pantry is definitely a safety net until you can build up that stability for your academics to grow, your personal mental health to grow... I see this as a place for students that are experiencing crisis, experiencing some sort of traumatic event that is happening to them that they can utilize this so they can better themselves in these other areas and eventually be stable on their own.⁴¹

The Cherry Pantry's role as a one stop shop for food insecure students is facilitated by easily accessible campus resources and a strong social community, which is enhanced by focused

⁴¹ Interview with Student Workers, February 28, 2019.

research. If any of these components are missing or lacking, then the extent that the Cherry Pantry is able to fulfill its mission is called into question.

A sign of easily accessible campus resources is frequent collaboration between departments and student organizations. At the most basic level, this requires partnerships which create food drives that can become consistent, reliable sources of food for the Cherry Pantry. In the first year of service, the Paley Library established an ongoing food drive and Campus Recreation has begun to coordinate regular drives. The participants also pointed to the pantry's relationships with the Office of Sustainability, the Wellness Center, and Student Affairs as models for future partnerships. A key component of these partnerships is that they go beyond food drives, "They do a lot of donation drives for us and they do a lot of awareness for students, [but also] if they have students that come up with a need or emergency or things of that nature, I've seen people bring them over here."⁴² They also acknowledge the limitations of their current collaborations as they are still developing optimal procedures for the Pantry, and have had to contend with increased student need. The ultimate realization of easily accessible campus resources is having a full-time staff member in the Cherry Pantry who can act as a connection point between students and the social safety net, by way of helping with SNAP applications and directing students to more specific sources of help scattered throughout the campus community. One participant understands the Cherry Pantry as stepping in to fill a gap in the Temple community, "We're not connecting the Wellness Resource department with this department or that department to create a hub of information for students. I think that's my goal for the pantry, to create more of that hub and connectedness..."⁴³

⁴² Interview with Cherry Pantry Supervisor, March 18, 2019.

⁴³ Interview with Student Workers, February 28, 2019.

Another core element of a connected campus is a strong sense of campus community and solidarity. While this may seem to be a challenging attribute to pin down, all participants pointed to this as a central aspect of the Cherry Pantry's mission. The past year saw attempts at building campus community mainly through outreach efforts with student organizations, where Cherry Pantry volunteers and student workers would go to organizations to present their mission and the importance of community support. This attempt at building campus community is being solidified by the creation of the Peer Educator position at the Pantry, which will be a contact person for student organizations seeking education and advocacy in regards to food insecurity. Some participants even note the location of the Cherry Pantry as playing a role in building campus solidarity, "I love the Student Center, because I think it gives a lot of access... [it's] the heart of student activities and student engagement."⁴⁴ These attempts at building community led to tangible results for the Cherry Pantry as evidenced by the number of people who are introduced and brought to the Pantry by peers and friends. One participant told a story in which, "a friend brought her to the pantry. She knew that you're not eating, you're not supporting yourself or providing for yourself [so here's] this thing that can help you."⁴⁵ This helps showcase how as awareness of food insecurity and the pantry spreads, the campus community is able to guide other members of the community to the proper help and resources.

Both of these characteristics of a connected campus must be supported by research for them to be successful. Research has been a guiding part of the Cherry Pantry's first year as it led to the Pantry's decision to offer hygiene products and the adoption of a feedback form to better understand students' needs and desires. The Pantry also collects the demographic information of

⁴⁴ Interview with Student Workers, February 28, 2019.

⁴⁵ Interview with Student Workers, February 28, 2019.

every student that utilizes the space, but this data has not led to any significant insights, other than providing added evidence for the need of the Pantry. The research has also led to insights that they have yet to be able to take advantage of like the need for a clear and effective website and social media presence. These tools act as a way to centralize information about the pantry for both users and donors, as well as make the process more interactive through the inclusion of features like an Amazon wishlist and incentives for donating. The programs at Amarillo College and Houston Community College were also mentioned by one participant as important case consultates for all campus pantries, “[Amarillo College is] trying to be proactive and creating this culture of caring where they’re reconfiguring how their staff think and how they hire staff based on [this philosophy].”⁴⁶ Case consultates will continue to play an important role in guiding the adoption of policies and procedures at the Cherry Pantry as they offer an important chance to see how other pantries have fared with the same problems.

The Lived Reality of Food Insecurity at Temple

The interviews provided important context for the lived reality of food insecurity at Temple University for both students and for the Cherry Pantry itself. The participants all acknowledged that food insecurity at Temple mirrors national trends with first generation college students, LGBTQ students, students of color, and students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds being more susceptible to food insecurity. Another shared characteristic between food insecurity at Temple and food insecurity nationwide is the feeling of shame that can come with food insecurity and seeking out help. The participants all acknowledge the role that shame

⁴⁶ Interview with Hope Center Research Practitioner, March 11, 2019.

plays in a student deciding whether or not to reach out for assistance from the surrounding community. As such, ensuring the dignity and privacy of Pantry users is a main concern for the Pantry, “you can’t assume what food insecurity is for every person... the volunteers want to support you in doing that and we don’t care if you’re hungry or not. We just want you to use the resource actively.”⁴⁷ Furthermore, participants mentioned how Pantry volunteers are equipped to protect the dignity and privacy of students by employing strategies of, “not wanting to make them feel shame for [their food selection], but always trying to be comforting and encouraging to the fact that this resource is here for you to get some nutritious standard of food.”⁴⁸ Ensuring the protection of student dignity and privacy is crucial if students are to utilize the pantry actively.

The biggest challenge mentioned by participants is developing sustainable strategies for stocking the Pantry shelves, while also dealing with the stress of increased student demand on the Pantry. The Pantry has struggled to scale its operations as the number of weekly pantry users has steadily increased over the course of the fall semester before plateauing around 180 students. Part of this struggle is rooted in the different contexts of the two semesters, “[In] fall semester, we get all the go green bins from the Sustainability office, that literally put us through the fall semester. All of those donations were from them as well as the Giant food drive... Those were sustainable for 180 students a week, because they were these huge drives that involved a mountain of people and so much planning and time.”⁴⁹ The same participant went on to say, “I think [the Cherry Pantry] can be sustainable with continuing donation drives and things like that, but once something stops being a hot topic no one wants to donate anymore... we need

⁴⁷ Interview with Student Workers, February 28, 2019.

⁴⁸ Interview with Student Workers, February 28, 2019.

⁴⁹ Interview with Student Workers, February 28, 2019.

consistent donors or we need a Temple budget to be sustainable.”⁵⁰ The pressing need for an official budget line from Temple was acknowledged by all to be the Pantry’s most pressing concern moving forward because “[the donation drives] are not keeping up with how many students are using the pantry and how much food we actually need in order to be a sustainable pantry.”⁵¹

The lack of a budget and the inability to keep fully stocked shelves throughout the spring semester has led to increased concern among some participants that food insecure students may experience added stress—emotionally, physically, and mentally—because of the Pantry’s current precarity. This predicament is why “food and hygiene donations are more important than monetary donations... monetary donations are great in large amounts, but if you’re going to spend \$25 donating to the givinglink, spend \$25 on pasta and drop it off instead, because that’s a more immediate direct service that you get.”⁵² Another issue of the massive growth in student users at the Cherry Pantry arises from spatial concerns. The current location of the Pantry is limited in its space and participants have already noticed it can cause added levels of stress as well as a sense of competition among some pantry users, which stems from too many people sharing the space at once.

Solutions and Goals

The Cherry Pantry’s goals for the coming year and beyond are partially based in actions that they can take, but are also connected to actions that must be carried out at the university level or at the state and national level of policy. Participants covered developing an accessible

⁵⁰ Interview with Student Workers, February 28, 2019.

⁵¹ Interview with Student Workers, February 28, 2019.

⁵² Interview with Student Workers, February 28, 2019.

website, creating an intake form, and continuing to utilize surveys to tailor service—for example, by way of documenting the majors of students to then utilize in targeted donation efforts—as ways that the Pantry can independently improve students’ access to the resource. Unfortunately, the bigger picture for tackling campus food insecurity requires policy change at levels beyond the control of the Cherry Pantry.

The most talked about desire for change in university level policy is the inclusion of the Cherry Pantry in the university's annual budget. This request could take two forms. The first entails receiving enough budget allocations to hire a full-time staff member for the Pantry that can act as a central point of contact for both food insecure students and members of the university community trying to help. This will also remove some stress from the supervisors’ positions because they currently do everything on a volunteer basis in addition to their other paid responsibilities. The other option involves fully funding the operations of the Pantry so that they can keep the shelves fully stocked, regardless of the amount of donations they receive week to week. Either budget option would be an incredible boon for the Pantry in the eyes of the participants as the lack of official recognition and funding has harmed their prospects and cut them off from more formal food pantry support services like Philabundance or even corporate donations like those from Whole Foods or Aldis. One participant summarized the problem succinctly, “So why do [other campus pantries] always have food? Oh right, because they’re on the university budget and they’re a recognized non-profit.”⁵³ The hope is that becoming a part of the budget would also signal a change in approach, “that’s why I say the holistic approach of supporting our students is definitely not something we do here at Temple, you have to be very

⁵³ Interview with Student Workers, February 28, 2019.

active in order to get that holistic support and do a lot in order to get any kind of support from Temple. It can be really challenging, which is why we want to make this as easy and encouraging as it can [be].”⁵⁴ Regardless, participants stressed that they are unsure how long the Pantry can be sustainable without an official budget.

Another recognition of participants is that policy change must also be made at the national and state level to truly deal with food insecurity. One participant sees national policy as the only real opportunity to create a long term solution, “schools have adopted this model of getting a food pantry which is amazing, but it’s just a band aid situation. It’s acknowledging there is a problem, but not really doing anything to create a long term solution.”⁵⁵ These long term solutions can be found by addressing the current high cost of higher education, which is forcing some students to budget eating out of their weekly spending. Long term solutions for student food insecurity revolve around reacting to the high cost of higher education by redesigning the FAFSA as well as overhauling financial aid so that students are not forced into such precarity because of their efforts to get a better education. This is not to suggest that the Cherry Pantry, or even Temple University, should shift all of their advocacy regarding food insecurity towards the national policy level; but rather, to highlight the multiple layers of the issue. After all, the research that universities like Temple and pantries like the Cherry Pantry conduct play an important role in shifting national policy and discourse.

Conclusion

1. Discussion

⁵⁴ Interview with Student Workers, February 28, 2019.

⁵⁵ Interview with Hope Center Research Practitioner, March 11, 2019.

The participants' understanding of student food insecurity and the role of the Cherry Pantry closely follows the existing literature surrounding the best practices for addressing the crisis, albeit with the pantry receiving significantly lower levels of formal university support compared to other programs. The Pantry is already following a number of recommended practices for campus pantries such as collecting data on pantry users and working to make it a one stop shop for students trying to secure their basic needs. These formal attempts at developing a connected campus are then supported by more informal efforts to fight food insecurity by way of building campus community and solidarity, which the literature highlights as an important subsidiary feature of campus pantries and their relationship with their campus. It is important to remember that the Cherry Pantry is also basing their future plans on the existing literature and the experiences of other campus pantries in the country.

Student food insecurity at Temple is representative of how food insecurity is experienced by students at other institutions throughout the United States. The literature establishes that the greater risk of food insecurity for marginalized communities is the result of discrimination and lack of equal opportunity, and students are no exception to these added risks. The Cherry Pantry's experience as a purely donation based food pantry is also found in the experiences of other donation based pantries. The duality of struggling to keep shelves fully stocked while also building campus community and solidarity is most often solved by other campus food pantries through formal university support, typically by way of budget allocations. The importance of this formal support is even more pressing at large universities and colleges where the demand to meet the basic needs of food insecure students is enormous.

2. Limitations

This research is limited in its scope because interviews were only conducted with five members of the Temple campus community who engage with food insecurity in their daily work. The small sample size potentially could have been offset by incorporating interviews with student volunteers at the Cherry Pantry, which would have provided additional perspectives on the Pantry's condition from integral team members. These volunteers also regularly interact with the same Pantry users on a week to week basis, so they may also have additional insights into the needs of food insecure students at Temple. An additional limitation, stemming from the small sample size, is that no pantry users or other members of the campus community were interviewed. This leaves a gap in the research as the way food insecure students conceptualize developing a connected campus, understand their food insecure reality, and envision solutions and goals is likely different from those who engage with food insecurity from a research or direct service perspective.

3. Future Research

If the goal is to create a more developed and holistic understanding of student food insecurity at Temple then any future research must keep the limitations of the present study in mind. Because there is doubt of when the Cherry Pantry will be included in the university's annual budget, future research will benefit from increased attention to the consequences of the stress of student demand on a strained campus food pantry. Particularly, does the stress of student demand hinder the ability of a campus community and feelings of solidarity to grow? Also, how does the stress of student demand affect the work of volunteers and student workers to develop a connected campus for food insecure students? Participants also detailed plans for expanding the Cherry Pantry by way of an intake form, an accessible and detailed website, and

the creation of the Peer Educator position. Future research should look to see how these adopted strategies impact the themes discussed within this paper, as well as how they impact the overall state of campus food insecurity at Temple. While the lack of inclusion of pantry users in this study limits future comparisons of how these proposed changes affect food insecure students, this is not an reason to exclude them in the future. Finally, if the Cherry Pantry is unable to secure budget allocations soon, then future research must also study how students, faculty, and staff have organized in the past around issues of meeting basic needs. The necessity of budget allocations for campus pantries is made clear by this study, so future research must also work to find and present possible steps for gaining this specific type of formal university support so the Cherry Pantry can thrive.

Appendix A: Interview Questions for Cherry Pantry Staff

- When did you join the team at the Cherry Pantry (CP)?
 - What are some of the biggest successes you've seen since you've joined?
 - What are some of the biggest challenges you've seen since you've joined?
- How many people typically use the CP each week?
 - Is any data collected on the students that use the CP?
 - If so, what kind of data and what steps are taken to protect the dignity and privacy of the student?
 - Does it seem that the CP mainly serves people who suffer from chronic food insecurity or acute food insecurity (regulars vs irregulars)?
 - Any sense of housing status?
 - Any sense of class status (freshman, sophomore, etc)?
 - Any comments from students regarding the location of the CP?
- How does the CP work to keep up with the demand of providing for the food insecure?
 - What is the typical size of donations?
 - What student, or university-run, organizations support the CP?
 - Who are the biggest supporters?
 - Do these organizations often provide regular, sustained support?
 - How successful have food drives been in the first year of the CP?
 - TSG, Paley fines, Fox, etc
 - Is the CP able to offer any formal assistance to food drives?
 - How important was the Giant donation to the CP?
 - Can the CP expect this level of support from corporations in the future?
 - Has the CP looked to any other campus pantry initiatives for ideas? If so, which ones? Have they been implemented?
- How does the CP see it's first year of operation?
 - What is the plan for the coming year?
 - Goals? Needs? Fears?
 - Any plans for expansion? (Akin to the CP now providing hygiene items)
 - Are there any long-term plans that extend past the scope of a year?
 - Does there seem to be anything unique about the way in which Temple students experience food insecurity?
- Does the CP make any efforts to assist students with issues outside of food insecurity?
 - Is the CP equipped to suggest other support services for food insecure students?
 - Which ones? How?

Appendix B: Interview Questions for Hope Center Staff

- When did you join the team at the Hope Center (HC)?
 - What is the primary focus of your work?
 - What some of the biggest successes and challenges you've encountered in your research?
 - How has the HC grown and/or changed since 2013?
- What is the mission of the HC?
 - Are you aware of any schools or programs that made changes or program implementations because of the HC's research?
 - Does the HC pay any particular attention to Temple University or the University of Wisconsin, Madison?
 - If so, anything notable about their experiences of campus food insecurity?
- What is the current state of undergraduate food insecurity?
 - What areas has the team made the most progress in understanding?
 - Any idea who are the most vulnerable groups of people to food insecurity?
 - Any sense of class status (freshman, sophomore, etc)?
 - Any idea which schools or regions are doing it best?
 - Why?
- Does the HC have any regular interactions with the Cherry Pantry?
 - Are you able to utilize their data in any way?
- At this point, what suggestions can the HC offer colleges and universities looking to fight campus food insecurity?
 - Anything specific regarding campus pantries?
 - Location?
 - Strategies to keep shelves stocked?
 - How do these suggestions compare to your understanding of what the Cherry Pantry is doing?
- Does the research indicate that campus food pantries are the most effective way to deal with campus food insecurity?
 - What other strategies do schools have in their toolbox?
- Is there anything you, or the team, would critique about Temple's approach to campus food insecurity?

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