



University
of Windsor

Food Security Action Plan Version 1.0



Table of Contents

Message from Vice-President, People, Equity & Inclusion3

Background Information4

Integrated Approach.....6

Purpose and Vision6

Guiding Principles7

Areas of Focus, Goals and Key Actions.....8

Next Steps 12

Acknowledgements 12

References 13

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the University of Windsor sits on Treaty 2 territory, the traditional territory of the Three Fires Confederacy of First Nations, which includes the Ojibwa, the Odawa, and the Potawatomi.

We are grateful to have the opportunity to live, work, and learn on this land, and we respect the long-standing relationships that the Indigenous Nations who have stewarded these lands and waters since time immemorial have to this place.

We acknowledge the historical and ongoing injustices of colonialism and neocolonialism and commit to actively working towards Truth and Reconciliation. This includes a commitment to ongoing education and critical reflection to challenge and dismantle colonial legacies.

Message from Vice-President, People, Equity & Inclusion

Dear colleagues, students and friends:

I am pleased to share with you the University's Food Security Action Plan Version 1.0. This plan reflects our commitment to ensuring that all students have access to safe, nutritious, culturally appropriate and affordable food.

Food insecurity is a significant issue facing many students, impacting their mental and physical health, overall well-being and academic success. This Action Plan outlines a comprehensive set of actions to address this challenge, including:

- Expanding immediate supports and exploring long-term solutions.
- Promoting food literacy and fostering a supportive and stigma free campus environment.
- Addressing systemic barriers including but not limited to, colonialism, racism, economic marginalization, and other systems of injustice.
- Building community partnerships to address the root causes of food insecurity.

The success of this Action Plan hinges on the unwavering commitment of academic and administrative leaders, collective support and active participation from the entire campus community and a student-centered approach that prioritizes and incorporates student voices, experiences and preferences throughout the implementation process.

Together we can achieve zero hunger on our campus.

Clinton Beckford
Vice-President, People, Equity & Inclusion



Background Information

Food Security

Food security, as defined by the 1996 World Food Summit, exists when food is readily available, accessible, safe, nutritious, and consistently reliable to support active and healthy lives. The right to food is a fundamental human right. It's recognized in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights as part of the right to an adequate standard of living. This right is further enshrined in the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (source: UN Human Rights, Fact Sheet No. 34). The UN reaffirmed this commitment in its 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes Goal #2: Zero Hunger, focusing on ending hunger, achieving food security, and improving nutrition. Despite the world producing ample food to feed its 7.8 billion inhabitants, nearly a billion people globally still experience chronic hunger. This paradox of hunger amidst plenty constitutes a significant global epidemic and a growing public health crisis. Research increasingly indicates that postsecondary students are among the most vulnerable populations experiencing food insecurity.

Dimensions of Food Security

- Physical availability: Sufficient and culturally appropriate food supply.
- Physical and economic access: Proximity to food sources and the ability to afford food (income and prices).
- Food quality and utilization: Nutritional intake, food safety, diet diversity, and balance.
- Stability/reliability: Consistent access to these dimensions over time.

These dimensions must be present simultaneously for true food security.

Food Insecurity and Canadian Post-Secondary Education

We have all heard the stereotype of the "ramen noodle" student. Unfortunately, this depiction reflects the reality for many college and university students. It's estimated that 40% of post-secondary students in Canada experience food insecurity (Maclean's, 2022). This prevalence is higher than the national average, indicating that these students lack stable or reliable access to sufficient, affordable, safe, and nutritious foods.

As students juggle tuition, housing, learning resources (textbooks), transportation, and food, the latter often gets sacrificed. Students frequently opt for cheap, filling, and quick-to-prepare options, often compromising nutrition and sometimes food safety (Maclean's, 2022).

There is a direct link between economic status and hunger. Students from low-income families are therefore more vulnerable. It is also no surprise that racialized students, students with disabilities, students with dependent children and families experience higher rates of food insecurity. Members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community also disproportionately experience food insecurity on Canadian postsecondary education campuses (McLeans, 2022).

Impact of Food Insecurity on Students

Food insecurity leads to hunger which has deleterious impacts on students. College and university campuses are microcosmic of the broader society where food insecurity and hunger are rampant and constitute a critical public health issue. For students, food insecurity adversely impacts physical and mental health and well-being with massive implications for student success and educational outcomes. Anecdotal evidence suggests that for many students, food insecurity has become a way of life. This is chronic food insecurity- it is long term and persistent. For other students' food insecurity is more transitory- it is short-term and temporary and may be seasonal/cyclical.

Addressing Food Insecurity on Our Campus

Historically, food security action on postsecondary education campuses, has been inspired and led by students for students. Student initiative and agency are critical, but given the current circumstances, it is critical for university administrations to play a greater role and lead the way to eliminate student food insecurity and hunger on their campuses. Students often feel that they are alone in this fight (Yong, 2022).

This action plan will help the University of Windsor:

- Assess the extent, patterns, and types of student food insecurity on campus.
- Identify existing food security initiatives and services.
- Develop and implement evidence-based solutions to address student hunger.

By working collaboratively with students, faculty, staff, and community partners, the university can strive to eliminate student hunger and create a more equitable and supportive environment for all.



Integrated Approach

The action plan is grounded in an integrated approach, addressing all four core dimensions of food security.

Food Availability

- Ensure sufficient quantities of food available in campus food programs.

Food Access

- Increase the affordability of food and enhance ability of students to meet their food needs.

Food Quality and Utilization

- Promote and provide food that is nutritious, and safe and ensure that diet diversity and balance is prioritized.

Food Stability/Reliability

- Ensuring that food availability, access, and quality, are present all year round.

Purpose and Vision

Purpose

To establish a robust and inclusive system of services and supports that ensures all students have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food.

Vision

We aim to be a compassionate and caring campus where zero hunger is achieved and all students have an opportunity to thrive physically, emotionally and academically without the burden of food insecurity.

Guiding Principles

Food Matters

Food security is a fundamental aspect of student well-being, significantly influencing academic success, physical health, and mental health.

Zero Hunger

Student hunger on campus can only be eradicated through a comprehensive and sustained approach that addresses the root causes of food insecurity within the post-secondary context.

Dignity and Stigma Reduction

All food security initiatives must intentionally and thoughtfully uphold the dignity of students and actively destigmatize food assistance supports.

Leadership and Responsibility

Senior leaders play a central role in addressing student food insecurity while prioritizing and integrating student voices, experiences and preferences into all food security initiatives.

Equity and Inclusion

A holistic approach that centers on cultural inclusivity, accommodates diverse dietary needs, considers individual lifestyle food choices and addresses food-related health concerns such as eating disorders is integral to addressing food insecurity.

Sustainability

Sustainability principles must be interwoven into all food security initiatives including prioritizing the use of ethical and responsibly sourced food.

Evidence-Based

A data driven approach is vital to monitor the effectiveness of interventions, continuously improve food security strategies and make informed decisions.

Multi-faceted Approach

A multi-faceted approach that includes providing accessible and affordable food options and addresses systemic factors contributing to food insecurity is key to maximize impact.



Areas of Focus, Goals and Key Actions

Area of focus: Food Insecurity Data Collection

Goal: To gather the necessary data to determine the prevalence and characteristics of food insecurity on campus and identify gaps and opportunities for improvement.

Key Action	Timeline		
	Short	Medium	Long
Conduct an inventory of campus food options available to students and identify potential gaps in delivery.	X		
Assess the current state of the campus food pantry and analyze any available utilization data.	X		
Identify the periods within the academic year (including examination periods) when food insecurity is most likely to be most acute.	X		
Identify short-term stop gap measures other than the food pantry.	X		
Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of current food assistance initiatives and identify opportunities for improvement.		X	
Evaluate cooking tools & equipment needs within residence buildings.		X	

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Area of Focus: Financial Resources

Goal: To secure financial resources to provide immediate supports and find long-term solutions.

Key Action	Timeline		
	Short	Medium	Long
Include food security in advancement goals and fundraising campaigns such as 'Giving Tuesday'.	X		
Dedicate carryover funds from students' meal plans to food security solutions.		X	
Collaborate with Advancement Office and alumni networks for fund-raising opportunities.		X	

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Area of Focus: Collaborations and Partnerships

Goal: To establish internal and external collaborations and partnerships to provide immediate supports to students and address the root causes of food insecurity.

Key Action	Timeline		
	Short	Medium	Long
Work closely with UWSA, GSS, and OPUS on food security planning and program delivery.	X		
Work closely with student groups including affinity groups on food security initiatives.	X		
Collaborate with Student Affairs to incorporate food security as a key consideration in supporting student mental health.	X		
Collaborate with Student Awards and Financial Aid and other offices within the Finance Department to explore opportunities to address the root causes of food insecurity.		X	
Collaborate with campus food services on innovative solutions, for all UWindsor campuses (main campus, south campus, and downtown campus) including provision of more sustainable-based and culturally diverse foods.		X	
Collaborate with campus services on off-campus food options/partnerships.		X	
Collaborate with catering services on more varied menu options, including sustainable-based and culturally diverse foods for student event planning.		X	
Establish partnerships with farms, greenhouses, food processing facilities, and local food banks, to procure provisions for the food security program.			X
Explore collaborations with local restaurants and grocery stores to provide more access to affordable food for students especially during times when the University is closed, and students do not have access to campus food services.			X
Work with local municipalities and community organizations on food security planning, including the WECHU and other organizations.			X

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Area of Focus: Immediate Supports and Long-Term Solutions

Goal: To reduce the prevalence of food insecurity among students by establishing sustainable food services programs and increasing access to affordable, healthy, and culturally appropriate food.

Key Action	Timeline		
	Short	Medium	Long
Organize strategic food drives all year round including at major events, games and Senate meetings to keep food pantries stocked.	X		
Conduct a cooking tools & equipment drive to assist students, on and off campus, with cooking tools and equipment needs.	X		
Establish a digital food security hub that connects students with campus and community food resources and information.	X		
Support student-led food security initiatives.	X		
Establish a food security emergency fund that students could apply for.	X		
Develop Food Community Share program with cooking classes and activities, canning and food preservation, recipe sharing, and development of recipes and cookbooks.		X	
Establish a second food locker/ pantry/fridge.		X	
Develop food shares, food stamps or vouchers, bursaries.		X	
Organize food box and/or grocery-card giveaways at events for students.		X	
Establish a fund for procuring shopping carts to assist students walking and/or using public transportation to access local grocery stores.		X	
Develop food rescue program or work with existing community program/s to procure food.		X	
Create an 'edible campus' and 'living lab' by for example, integrating fruit trees and a diversity of vegetables and spices that could be grown as gardens and incorporated into campus landscaping.			X
Develop a Campus Community Garden dedicated to campus food security.			X
Establish a campus greenhouse that could integrate research, teaching and food security priorities and would establish year-round food production.			X
Increase opportunities for students to work on campus to enhance financial stability.		X	

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Area of Focus: Food Literacy and Stigma Reduction

Goal: To enhance food literacy, promote open communication and education and create a supportive and stigma-free campus environment.

Key Action	Timeline		
	Short	Medium	Long
Launch an awareness raising campaign aimed to destigmatize food insecurity and engage in healthy dialogue on hunger.	X		
Develop comprehensive food literacy resources including practical guides on budgeting, shopping tips, and cookbooks featuring affordable and nutritious recipes.		X	
Develop and disseminate educational resources, workshops and presentations around food security, with the aim to destigmatize experiences of food insecurity.		X	

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Area of Focus: Research and Continuous Improvement

Goal: To conduct research on food insecurity and regularly evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives to improve impact.

Key Action	Timeline		
	Short	Medium	Long
Conduct food security research to take stock of the status of campus food insecurity to inform future food security action plans.			X
Conduct regular environmental scans of campus food security.			X
Evaluate campus food services within the context of the plan's guiding principles and work with provider to make any necessary changes.			X

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Next Steps

The areas of focus outlined in this document will help address the complexity of food insecurity and contribute to a more equitable and just campus environment.

To operationalize this plan, a **Food Security Working Group** will be established comprised of diverse voices and perspectives.

Regular evaluation and assessment will inform program/initiative development and improvement to address immediate needs and contribute to long-term systemic change.

Acknowledgements

The development of this Action Plan is a testament to the collaborative spirit and unwavering commitment demonstrated by our campus community in addressing food insecurity. We extend our sincere gratitude and recognition to the following individuals and groups for their invaluable contributions:

Daniella Beaulieu	Learning Specialist, Office of the Vice-President, People, Equity and Inclusion
Clinton Beckford	Vice President, People, Equity and Inclusion
Hamza Behiry	Vice President, University of Windsor Students' Alliance
Marcela Ciampa	Organizational Effectiveness Strategist, Human Resources
Kaitlyn Ellsworth	Black Student Support Coordinator, Division of Student Affairs
Fatima Fakih	Faculty of Education
Ronnie Haidar	Student Engagement and Outreach Coordinator, FAHSS
Shae Harasym	Director, Ancillary Operations, Office of Associate Vice-President, Operations
Nadia Harduar	Sustainability Officer, Office of the Provost
Shetina Jones	Associate Vice-President, Student Experience, Division of Student Affairs
Nikita Pattathil	Undergrad Student, School of Social Work
Raagishwar Singh	
Lakhanpal	Grad Student, Mechanical, Automotive & Materials Engineering
Sarah Woodruff	
Atkinson	Associate Dean Academic Programs, Kinesiology

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