

UIC POP-UP PANTRY



SUPPORT STUDENT WELLNESS

Spring 2017

AN URGENT NEED

Imagine the struggles of college students from low-income families, balancing the need for basic necessities like food with the need to pay for tuition, fees, textbooks, and school supplies. They might have to make some difficult choices.

Food insecurity is an often overlooked problem on college campuses nationwide. Experts agree that the human brain needs 20 percent of the calories consumed in a day to perform thousands of critical tasks, like reading and absorbing new knowledge.

Research from Oregon State University, published in the May 2014 issue of the Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior, states that, "Most college students, with some exceptions, are not eligible for food stamps and many are often already carrying heavy debt loads."

This research also discovered that food insecurity has a direct correlation with poorer health and a lower grade point average.

Consider this fact:

Fifty percent of UIC students are eligible for Federal Pell and Illinois MAP funds, which are granted based on financial need. That's half of UIC students coming from households with annual incomes of less than \$50,000, with many from households earning \$30,000 or less.

A large proportion of UIC students are first generation college students, children of immigrants, or are from under-resourced areas of Chicago and may have young children of their own. These students need a greater level of support to meet their basic needs and achieve academic success.

UIC'S SOLUTION: THE POP-UP PANTRY

Launched in November 2014, the UIC Pop-up Pantry has a mission to bridge the gap between hunger and sustenance for its students. The Pop-up Pantry is the result of a partnership between the UIC Administration, the UIC Wellness Center, and the Undergraduate Student Government. These groups are united in their commitment to help students stay healthy and stay fed in a manner that respects student privacy.

At the grand opening of the Pop-Up Pantry, a student relayed the following on her intake form, a humbling reminder of the need for this service at UIC:

What would you like to tell us?

"Wow! What a great resource! Studying while worrying about eating because of financial constraints is always an issue for me."

How often are you hungry because of financial constraints?

"All of the time."



HOW DOES THE PANTRY WORK?

On Pop-Up Pantry days, students in need of food due to financial constraints present their university ID, receive a number, fill out an intake form, receive a shopping basket, and “shop” the pantry shelves using a point system explained to them as they wait for their number to be called. After shopping, volunteers/staff bag the chosen items into a reusable tote bag for students to take with them. The entire process should take no more than twenty minutes and volunteers are ready to serve and assist students as needed.

Food items have been generously donated by staff and students across the university. The initial outpouring of donations was beyond expectations, indicating a broad campus understanding of this need. Support for the pantry continues to grow and every donation, no matter the size, is beyond appreciated by the Pop-Up Pantry and the UIC student body it aims to serve.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

The Pop-Up Pantry needs donations of non-perishable food items and supplies such as plastic storage bins, can openers, tote bags and shelving. In addition, financial donations to the UIC Pop-Up Pantry Fund will allow the team to purchase items as needed and have the ability to respond quickly to shifts in demand. Please see the “Donate” tab for more information.

Early Impact Facts From the Pop-Up Pantry’s First Week (2014):

*Students served: 104

*Number of food items
distributed: 832

*Number of food items
donated by UIC
students and staff:
3,782

For more information on supporting this initiative, please contact:

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