

ENDING FOOD INSECURITY AT CUNY

A guide for faculty and staff

2018



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Healthy CUNY is a university-wide initiative that since 2007 has promoted health for academic success at CUNY. It is sponsored by the CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy and the CUNY Office of Student Affairs.



The CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute works with partners to provide evidence to inform municipal policies that promote equitable access to healthy, affordable food. It leverages the expertise and commitments of CUNY faculty, staff and students to solving urban food problems and is based at the CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy.

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PART 1—INTRODUCTION

The Goal: Ending Food Insecurity among CUNY Students by 2023

According to surveys of CUNY students, about 60,000 CUNY undergraduates—about one in four—experience food insecurity,¹ defined as not having enough resources to regularly get the food needed to maintain health.² Hunger and food insecurity are among the most debilitating consequences of poverty. Not having enough to eat or having to worry about whether you can afford your next meal makes it harder for students to stay in school and to achieve their full academic potential. While poverty is the underlying cause of food insecurity, college students face other life circumstances that put them at risk of being hungry and require the attention of higher education policy makers.

For CUNY, which aspires to be the world's greatest urban university, setting the goal of ending food insecurity among its students within five years provides our university with a specific and achievable opportunity to translate this vision into practice. In this guide, several faculty who have been tackling food insecurity at CUNY in the last several years have teamed up with the CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute and Healthy CUNY, a university initiative to promote health for academic success at CUNY, to propose some ways that CUNY faculty and staff can contribute to the goal of ensuring that within five years all CUNY students will be food secure.

In previous reports, Healthy CUNY has described roles that CUNY students, nonprofit groups, university administrators, and city, state and federal policy makers can take to end food insecurity and other health problems among CUNY students.³ In this report, we focus on roles for faculty and staff. Ending food insecurity at CUNY will require a full mobilization of CUNY faculty, staff, students, and administrators. This Guide is our effort to contribute to that aim.

Although the definition of food insecurity is broadly applicable to all groups, how our students and their families achieve food security depends on their specific life circumstances. For CUNY's food insecure students, there are many paths to food security. This Guide aims to define and illuminate as many paths as possible that will make it easy for students to find healthy food they can afford and to support students in achieving their own vision of healthy food choices.

CUNY's culturally diverse students come from a multitude of backgrounds and lifestyles. As a result, no one strategy will serve all students at all times. While food pantries that send food home with students can be help those with the facilities and skills to store food and cook, other students may lack such resources. Many students are parts of

multigenerational families, with responsibility for children and other family members, while others live by and care for only themselves. Assisting students who want to cook to have the skills and resources to do so is a valuable service, but it is also important to provide access to affordable and healthy prepared foods to students whose schedules or living arrangements do not permit them to cook. Sometimes nutritional advice that emphasizes cooking or generic recipes for health do not take sufficient consideration of the cultural variation in tastes, styles of food preparation and consumption of meals.



Panelists from the CUNY Urban Food Policy Forum on Food Security in NYC in May 2018

Photo credit: CUNY Food Security Advocates

Our approach to achieving food security seeks to engage CUNY students in an inquiry-driven process of understanding the structural factors contributing to food insecurity, the cultural, economic, political and social resources they have available to address food insecurity and to motivate them to work toward ending food insecurity. Of course, not every student will choose to participate in this effort, but engaging CUNY students in learning about food security and acting to end it in our community is an appropriate and meaningful project for our university.

In developing a multi-year coordinated and comprehensive campaign to end food insecurity among our students, we need to be able to answer the following questions:

- **Why is food security an issue at CUNY and among college students?**
- **What is known about the prevalence of food insecurity at CUNY?**
- **What are the academic and other benefits of raising this issue in and out of CUNY classrooms?**
- **What do CUNY students need to know about food security?**

In the next section, we suggest answers to these questions, then propose strategies for bringing these ideas into the classroom, onto the campus and into the culture of our university.

PART 2—Q AND A ON FOOD INSECURITY AT CUNY

—Why is food security an issue at CUNY and among college students?

Sixty thousand CUNY students, about one in four undergraduates, are food insecure, according to a 2015 survey of a representative sample of CUNY undergraduates by Healthy CUNY. Rates are higher for students from low-income households, community college students and Black and Latino students and lower for white and middle-class students. While low-income households have the highest rates of food insecurity, no group is immune. A job loss, an eviction, a hospitalization, a tuition hike or cut in a scholarship, an abusive partner, a bout of depression, — any of these events can move a food secure student into food insecurity and hunger.

Several factors account for these high rates of food insecurity among CUNY students. First, there are many low-income students at CUNY. In 2017, 52.9 percent of CUNY community college students and 37.1 percent of senior college students lived in households with annual incomes less than \$20,000 a year.⁴ The rising cost of college tuition, housing, transportation and other basic necessities has forced many college students to choose between tuition, books and the subway fare to school on the one hand, and food and housing stability on the other. This is a choice no decent society should impose on its students.

"NO CUNY STUDENT SHOULD HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN PAYING FOR TUITION, BOOKS OR SUBWAY FARE TO SCHOOL AND BUYING THE NEXT MEAL."

In addition, an emerging body of evidence suggests that food insecurity and housing instability each adversely influence academic success, both directly and through their reciprocal relationships with other issues such as depression and partner violence. Several studies have observed that food insecurity is inversely associated with grade point average (GPA).^{5,6,7} Further, a university-based study reported that 32.8 percent of its sample reported decreased ability to concentrate due to hunger, while another survey reported that those experiencing severe food insecurity were more likely to report difficulty concentrating during an exam.^{8,9}

Another study found that food insecurity was associated with an increased likelihood of college withdrawal.¹⁰ In addition, a report from San Jose State University observed that students facing food insecurity were more likely to report having to choose between food and academic expenses.¹¹

For almost 150 years, City University of New York and its predecessors have led the

nation in providing access to higher education and reducing the inequalities in income and wealth that increasingly characterize New York City and the nation. A recent study found that no university system in the United States moves more low-income students from poverty into the middle class than CUNY.¹² In the last decade, CUNY has demonstrated the success of major new initiatives to reduce the academic and financial barriers that make it difficult for students to complete college.

But CUNY could do much better. According to the most recent data, the five-year graduation rate for students who entered community colleges in 2011 was 28.8 percent and the eight-year system-wide graduation rate for students who entered baccalaureate degree programs in 2007 was 52 percent.¹³ While some students who fail to graduate in 5 or 8 years go on to finish later, most do not. Each student who drops out loses the educational, economic and health benefits of a college education; CUNY loses its prior investment in this student; and New York City and State lose the gains in health, productivity, taxes paid, and civic engagement associated with college degrees. For these reasons, improving graduation rates at CUNY is an urgent educational, health and social justice priority; success in achieving this goal will bring benefits to all New Yorkers. One specific way to achieve these goals is to act to end food insecurity.

"SUCCESS IN ENDING FOOD INSECURITY AT CUNY WILL BRING ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND HEALTH BENEFITS TO ALL NEW YORKERS."

Why act now? In his second inaugural address in January 2018, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio announced his goal of making New York City the “fairest big city in America.” Ensuring that the nation’s largest urban public university contributes to a fairer city by connecting its students to food and thereby increasing their graduation rates help to make that goal a reality. In his State of the State speech in January 2018, New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo announced a new initiative to ensure that “No Student Goes Hungry”, which would include students from kindergarten through college.¹⁴ Making that aim come true would enable New York State and its Governor to build on the Excelsior Program, which provides financial support for college students in New York’s public universities and make New York a national showcase for increasing access to and completion of a college education. Finally, many New York City and national foundations have vowed to contribute to making the city and nation fairer and to end the stark inequalities in educational attainment, health and wealth by class and race/ethnicity.



CUNY Food Security Advocates at John Jay, Brittany, Laura, and Marleny, set up their first Food Justice Expo.

Image Credit: Kathleen Delgado

—What is known about the prevalence of food insecurity at CUNY?

Food insecurity is prevalent for CUNY students and their communities and families. While in 2015 a quarter of undergraduate students report some level of food insecurity, almost 15 percent report they had gone hungry sometimes or often in the past year because they lacked resources to buy food, an indicator of a high level of food insecurity. This represents a decrease from the 22.7 percent of students who reported this in 2010, demonstrating the capacity to significantly reduce food insecurity with focused action. In this case, an expansion of the national, New York State and New York City Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as Food Stamps), more aggressive outreach for public food benefits, and the creation of Single Stop benefit enrollment centers and food pantries on several CUNY campuses, as well as the overall improvement in the economy, may have contributed to this decline.

Food assistance resources, such as SNAP and food pantries, serve as a safety net for individuals struggling to afford food and can play a protective role against food insecurity. Students' current usage of these resources provides a measure of student need and can help inform interventions by identifying potential gaps in service access and utilization. In 2015, only 9 percent of CUNY undergraduate students reported using food assistance resources or services in the past 12 months. Even among those students who reported food insecurity, use was limited. Only a small fraction (17 percent) of food insecure students utilized food assistance in the past 12 months, showing that existing programs are not adequately addressing the problem.

Food insecure students were about 2.5 times more likely than food secure students to

use such resources: 17 percent of food insecure compared with 7 percent of food secure students. Of note, more than half (55 percent) of the students using these resources were food secure. In 2015, only 17 percent of food insecure students were aware of any on-campus resources available to them.

Of the students reporting to use food assistance services in the last 12 months, the most commonly used services were SNAP, used by 82 percent of those who used resources; WIC used by 14 percent; food pantries by 10 percent, on-campus meal vouchers by 10 percent, and farmers' market Health Bucks, used by 7.0 percent. Only 5 percent of students using resources reported using on-campus enrollment assistance or Single Stop services.

FOOD INSECURE STUDENTS WHO UTILIZE FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AT CUNY, 2015	
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	82%
Women Infants and Children (WIC)	14%
Food Pantries	10%
On-campus meal vouchers	10%
Farmers' Market Health Bucks	7%
On-campus SNAP Enrollment/Single Stop	5%

—What are the academic and other benefits of raising this issue in and out of CUNY classrooms?

Raising the issue of food insecurity in the classroom and in faculty and staff one-on-one interactions with students has several potential benefits. These include:

- Familiarizing students with information about the availability of food assistance resources on campus.
- Assisting students to learn about poverty, health and hunger, intellectually significant social issues in New York City, the United States and globally.
- Encouraging students to take action to reduce food insecurity among their peers, family and community.
- Engaging students in civic action and advocacy on food insecurity and related issues on their campuses and in their communities.
- Providing opportunities for students to gain relevant professional skills in human services, health care, action research, advocacy, nutrition and other fields.

Later sections of this guide describe specific ways that CUNY faculty and staff can plan and launch activities to achieve each of these goals.



CUNY Food Security Advocate, Raquel Melendez, hosts a tour of the Lincoln Hospital farmers' market for Hostos Community College students.

Image Credit:
Kathleen Delgado

—What do CUNY students need to know about food security?

To assist readers of this Guide to focus their activities, we suggest 10 key facts on food security that every CUNY student should know. All activities listed in Part 3 can help to communicate and develop these 10 facts.

1. Food insecurity—not having enough to eat—is a common problem in New York City and among CUNY students.
2. Food insecurity has multiple causes, including individual, social, economic and political causes.
3. Food insecurity can contribute to poor health and nutritional status, poor mental health outcomes academic issues, and other problems.
4. While rates of food insecurity in New York City are higher among low-income households, no group is immune from food insecurity.
5. CUNY has a variety of resources to help students facing food insecurity. These include food pantries on 12 campuses, Single Stop programs on 8 campuses, emergency loans on multiple campuses and a variety of other resources. CUNY faculty and student services staff can help connect students to these and other sources of help.
6. New York City has more than 750 food pantries and soup kitchens. Several lists are available to find one in every neighborhood.

7. The issue of food insecurity is not a result of an inadequate food supply, especially in New York City. Here, food insecurity is the result of social and economic systems that have produced high levels of income inequality, leaving some families and groups with inadequate income to afford healthy food regularly.

8. Several federal food programs play an important role in reducing food insecurity. The three largest are the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, SNAP, (previously known as Food Stamps); WIC, a program that provides benefits to pregnant women, new mothers and their young children; and school and other institutional food programs, which provide free breakfasts, lunches and snacks to school and preschool children and adults in senior programs. The majority of Americans have benefitted from Food Assistance programs.

9. For many CUNY students and other New Yorkers, getting help for food insecurity can be seen as a sign of weaknesses or failure and put recipients at risk of stigma. Reducing such stigma is an important component of reducing food insecurity.

10. In a college setting, where many students are transitioning from a free public school education and a new role as an adult, the student's family is often the first safety net for food security.

PART 3 — STRATEGIES FOR BRINGING FOOD SECURITY TOPICS INTO THE CURRICULUM

This section describes nine different strategies that CUNY faculty or staff can use to bring food insecurity into classroom discussion or other encounters with students.

1—Develop a course on food security/insecurity.

A course focusing on food insecurity in the United States might fit readily into the curricula of departments of sociology, anthropology, political science and public policy, history, public health, education, social work, nursing, ethnic studies, economics, and, of course, nutrition. Such a course could also be an excellent topic for a general social science course. Extensive literature is available in journals of public health, education,

child development, nutrition, and across the social and policy sciences. Every year, the federal government releases statistics on the extent and distribution of household food insecurity in the US. Survey data is published regularly on food and other forms of hardship.

Typically, a course on food security would cover the nature and definition of food security, the extent and distribution of food insecurity and the way in which it is measured, its consequences, which have been studied extensively, its causes, and efforts to prevent and alleviate it. It might cover both the national level and the state and local levels, and students might be encouraged to investigate food insecurity on their own campuses or in their own neighborhoods. Considering food security from a global perspective, with cross national comparisons, can also generate courses appropriate for economics, political science and a range of other disciplines.

Such a course can easily be adapted to reflect the central controversies and divergent theoretical perspectives of a discipline. In Sociology, for example, a course on food insecurity could be approached from either a social constructionist viewpoint, or an objectivist viewpoint, and makes an excellent example for comparing these two approaches.

Campuses could also consider creating a course and certificate to prepare students to be Food Security Advocates on their campuses, an approach described in more detail in Part 4. Such courses could include both classroom sessions and attendance at community lectures on food security and required hours of volunteer work at campus or community-based food security or advocacy organizations.

2—Add lectures, readings or modules on food security to existing courses.

The material on food insecurity at CUNY can provide a starting point for engaging students in a wide variety of courses. Any course concerned with poverty and inequality can (and should!) include material on food insecurity, and any course focused on poverty alleviation should certainly include material on food assistance, now a far larger form of support than cash welfare. The measurement of food insecurity in the United States has a substantial and fascinating history that would make an excellent case study for any course concerned with quantitative methods or with definition and measurement. The CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute has begun the process of compiling a “Lesson Bank” on Food Security and welcomes your contributions.

3—Assign observations of public programs or events related to food insecurity.

In New York City, there are hundreds of food pantries and soup kitchens, dozens of farmers markets distributing “Health Bucks,” more than two hundred senior nutrition program sites, and at least a half dozen activist organizations using advocacy strategies in an effort to reduce food insecurity through public policy. These organizations often hold public events and may welcome volunteers or permit observers. Students can locate organizations in their own neighborhoods by using the Neighborhood Food Guides provided by Hunger Free America (formerly the New York City Coalition Against Hunger) or by registering to volunteer on the City Harvest website or the Food Bank for New York City web site.

The City Council holds an annual “oversight hearing” on Hunger in New York (usually in the week before Thanksgiving) and other City Council hearings touch on the various anti-hunger programs funded or administered by the City, particularly the budget hearings held every year in the spring. Any New Yorker may testify. Consider assigning students to attend the hearings, and/or to submit testimony.

These organizations and events provide excellent opportunities to use the City as a learning laboratory, to help students explore aspects of the city that are new to them, and to introduce them to the extensive network of organizations working to reduce food insecurity in New York.

4—Include food security as a topic for research for class assignments.

Consider encouraging students to conduct research on food security for research papers. This topic has the advantage of lending itself to both quantitative and qualitative methods. Students can conduct literature reviews, analyze data sets, review the reports generated by advocacy organizations or conduct interviews of their own, in compliance with IRB requirements. For example, students in a geography class could map food assistance resources in one or two New York City communities, comparing availability by neighborhood. Students in a nutrition or community health class could identify, visit and describe several sources of healthy affordable food in one low-income NYC community, creating their own definition of “food oases”, in a juxtaposition to “food deserts”.

5—Sponsor independent study projects related to food insecurity.

Some students may wish to delve more deeply into this topic than the confines of a single course permit. Consider agreeing to sponsor independent study on food security related topics.

6—Advocate for attention to food security/insecurity in your department's curriculum.

Many departments have special topical courses or seminars—for majors nearing graduation, for freshmen as an invitation to the major and so on. Urge your department to consider food security as a topic for such courses.

7—Invite students in your classes to raise food security concerns with you during office hours.

This will require being prepared to refer them to the support services available on your campus or in the community. Contact your Student Services office to find out what resources are available on your campus (i.e., food pantries, meal vouchers, help with SNAP application, emergency cash assistance).

8—Invite guest speakers on food security to your classes.

These visits can be a scheduled part of your syllabus or an alternative to canceling classes if you must miss a session. Speakers can often be obtained from any of the advocacy organizations listed in the resource guide, or from Healthy CUNY or the CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute. Student Services offices on most campuses will welcome an opportunity to speak with students about available supports and services.

9—Schedule brief *Know Your Rights* presentations by non-profit organizations, student services staff, or organized student groups.

These sessions can help students in need connect with available resources. Such sessions familiarize students with rules for SNAP, WIC, School Food and other food entitlement and benefit programs.

No faculty member can take on all these tasks but every CUNY faculty member can find something on this list that will contribute to action to ensure that all our students achieve food security.

PART 4— STRATEGIES FOR RAISING FOOD SECURITY AT CUNY OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

In addition to bringing the issue of food security into the classroom, CUNY faculty and staff can find opportunities to address food insecurity in the many settings outside the classroom where CUNY students learn, volunteer, look for services, develop professional skills and socialize.



Food Security Advocates at Hostos set up a table to distribute information on food assistance programs for students on campus.

Image Credit:
CUNY Food Security Advocates

1—Add food security placements into existing internship or field placement programs.

Many CUNY students are required or have the option to complete internships or field placements as part of their degree requirements. Adding placements in New York City's more than 750 food pantries and soup kitchens, at CUNY food security programs, and in other settings can provide students with the opportunity for experiential learning, civic engagement, and professional development. Already CUNY degree programs in human services, nutrition, nursing, social work, public health and other fields include placements at such sites.

2—Create or publicize volunteer opportunities on campus and in community.

Most New York City food security programs depend on volunteers and CUNY students could bring language and media skills, commitment to helping others, and a desire to learn useful professional skills to these organizations. Assisting groups to recruit CUNY students as volunteers has the potential of being a win-win event. Several organizations recruit volunteers:

- [Food Bank for New York City](#)
- [City Harvest](#)

- [Hunger Free America](#)
- [Bedford Stuyvesant Campaign Against Hunger](#)
- [Grow NYC](#)
- [Community Food Advocates](#)
- [West Side Campaign Against Hunger](#)
- [New York Common Pantry](#)

3—Bring food security to campus expos, health fairs and other events.

Most CUNY campuses regularly sponsor or host events that bring many organizations to campus to publicize their services, recruit staff or volunteers or serve students directly. By including campus or community programs that work on food security, such events can serve as an additional site for outreach, providing help and linking students to existing services. Offering *Know Your Rights* sessions at these events will enable more students to find the help they need.

4—Establish or support student clubs or associations that can take up food justice or food security.

Student-led organizations have the potential to reach peers not served by CUNY student services. Many student organizations have the potential or have already taken on the issue of food security. A Healthy CUNY survey identified more than 120 student peer education programs at CUNY. Ethnic clubs, social justice organizations, LGBT groups, immigrants' rights groups, clubs for students with disabilities—all have the potential to advocate for policies and programs to reduce food insecurity, educate their peers about available services, and link students with existing help. By supporting such groups or helping to create them, CUNY faculty and staff can increase their impact. Inviting members of a club to give short presentations in a class is one way to provide such support.

5—Raise food security in student orientation sessions.

Many CUNY campuses offer voluntary or required orientation sessions for entering students. These include courses for credit and required or voluntary workshops. Some are in person; others online. By including information on food security resources in these sessions, student services and other staff can help more students become familiar with the available campus and community food security services.

6—Add information on food security and food security resources to campus and CUNY websites.

Every campus has a website as does CUNY as a whole. In addition, many CUNY programs offer websites, Facebook pages and groups, and other online presences. By including accessible and useful information about food insecurity and sources of help on each of these sites, CUNY can better ensure that all students know about where to get help to address food insecurity. CUNY faculty and staff can encourage the university officials responsible for these websites to add food security information.

7—Become a faculty food security advocate.

The faculty who prepared this guide developed the concept of faculty food security advocates, defined as faculty members who want to take on more responsibilities to connect their students to help on food security and to advocate for additional CUNY programs to end food insecurity among CUNY students.

Among the roles for faculty food security advocates are:

- Provide information on campus-based food resources to their students.
- Invite and encourage other faculty to provide information on campus-based food resources to their students do the same
- Include instruction and readings on food security content in classes as appropriate
- Advocate for campus administrators to promote SNAP use for eligible students
- Advocate for more affordable, healthy food on campus in cafeterias and elsewhere
- Work to reduce the stigma students may associate with being hungry and with getting help for food insecurity
- Educate colleagues about the prevalence of food insecurity among CUNY students, and about resources for combatting it at departmental meetings and other faculty forums
- Provide students with information on how to eat healthily on a tight budget

- Conduct research on food insecurity on campus (and engage students in such research)
- Seek grants and other resources to help college student groups and others to reduce address campus food insecurity on the campus
- Provide guidance on healthy food to food service vendors
- Lead regular discussions and present resources on food security monthly at departmental meetings
- Establish a campus food security advocacy blog or newsletter
- Maintain a phone tree of 3 or more people that can take action when food security issues or events come up
- Create networks for sharing information, resources and advocacy opportunities on food security with other faculty in discipline on other CUNY campuses
- Advocate for CUNY and public policies that reduce food insecurity (and against policies that increase it)
- Help campuses to reduce food waste and redirect safe and healthy potentially wasted food to students in need
- In 2019-2020, Healthy CUNY will seek to develop training and other support for CUNY faculty who want to take on this role.

8—Support, join or create initiatives to grow, distribute or sell healthy affordable food on campus.

On several CUNY campuses, students, sometimes with faculty or CUNY support, are growing, distributing or selling healthy affordable food. At Kingsborough Community College, a farm grows food that is distributed in the school cafeteria and elsewhere. At Hostos Community College, aeroponic towers are growing vegetables distributed on campus. At John Jay College, student services program let students know by tweet or text message that free food is available after an event is over.

PART 5—FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AT CUNY

Some campuses have already developed multiple intersecting initiatives to address food insecurity. Here we briefly describe some of these programs. To find out more contact the staff at these programs.

Food Related Programs at CUNY

Single Stop

Single Stop provides free comprehensive social, legal and financial services to students at CUNY's seven community colleges and at John Jay College, a four-year CUNY college. Single Stop counselors advocate for students to address barriers that prevent them from attending and completing school, such as having to take on work responsibilities to meet food and housing needs. Single Stop staff use a computerized screening tool that condenses thousands of pages of eligibility rules into a 15-minute question-and-answer session. Single Stop counselors interview students and in some cases family members to provide them with information about the federal, state or local benefits they are eligible to receive. They then assist eligible students to begin the application process. This screening tool identifies public benefits such as health insurance, nutrition programs such as WIC and SNAP, housing assistance, subsidies for childcare, and energy assistance as well as tax credits.

Single Stop offices work with community partners. The Financial Counseling Division of the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG), for example, offers comprehensive financial counseling to help students increase financial literacy, manage expenses, address debt, and obtain tax refunds. Single Stop can also refer students to free legal counseling to assist students with immigration, landlord/tenant issues, homelessness or sudden loss of housing. Between 2009 and 2015, CUNY Single Stop sites served almost 75,000 students and gained access to benefits, legal services, financial counseling, and tax refunds valued at \$178 million. A preliminary assessment conducted at LaGuardia Community College has suggested that students who received Single Stop services have a higher retention rate than those in a comparison group. By 2020, CUNY hopes to extend the Single Stop program to more senior colleges. Single Stop integrates services across the many domains that influence students' academic success and well-being.¹⁵ For more information: <http://www2.cuny.edu/current-students/student-affairs/special-programs/single-stop/>

Food Pantries

Food pantries located at 13 CUNY campuses provide free food to food insecure students and their families and assist people to obtain food benefits such as SNAP. Campus food pantries are designed to meet the immediate food needs of students on campus

by providing a variety of non-perishable food items. Five campus-based pantries with refrigeration also offer limited fresh produce, meat and dairy products. Currently ten campus pantries are affiliated with the Food Bank for New York City (FBNYC). Most pantries are located and administered within Single Stop offices or partner with internal and external organizations, concerned faculty and student clubs. FBNYC provides training for pantry coordinators and guidelines for food safety and nutrition and access to subsidized, wholesale, and donated food items. In addition to emergency food help, campus food pantries provide nutrition education, and connections to public benefits (SNAP, WIC) and community resources for students in need of assistance. Campus food pantries are important as they serve students who may need immediate assistance and are reluctant to access community-based emergency feeding programs in their home neighborhoods.

The Carroll and Milton Petrie Student Emergency Grant Fund

The Petrie Emergency Grant Fund provides quick-response emergency grants to matriculated students in good academic standing who are facing a short-term financial emergency. The goal of the Petrie Student Emergency Grant Fund is to help students remain in school. Emergencies that qualify for a Petrie Grant include:

- Homelessness or sudden loss of housing
- Fire in living quarters
- Travel expenses due to illness/death in immediate family
- Overdue utility bills/turn-off notice
- Theft of computer, books, clothing or other essential belongings
- Medical/Dental emergencies
- Food or transportation needs
- Temporary loss of job or income
- Transportation
- Loss of childcare
- Victims of domestic violence

For students in crisis, the Petrie Fund can be an important source of short-term help.

CUNY Food Security Advocates Project

To advance the goal of ending food insecurity among college students, the CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute and Healthy CUNY launched a demonstration project in January 2018. The CUNY Food Security Advocates project prepared students at John Jay College and Hostos Community College to develop advocacy skills and to act to reduce food insecurity and hunger on their campuses.

Two faculty with the CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute conceptualized this project and enlisted faculty and administrators at John Jay and Hostos in its development and implementation. It was offered as a credit-bearing course with an on-site internship experience. With the support of a grant from the Jewish Foundation for the Education of Women, the Project hired a coordinator to assist students to develop their own advocacy projects in partnership with college campus programs. The goal was to have students who were prepared to educate their peers about programs such as SNAP and WIC. Food Security Advocates also connected their peers to campus food pantries and Single Stop Centers, worked to reduce the stigma associated with food assistance programs, and advocated changing local and institutional programs and policies that block access to healthy food. Students who completed the course and about 100-hour field placement and additional training received a stipend of \$1,000.



Students at Hostos set up a micro food pantry and give students non-perishable items along with vegetables grown through hydroponic towers.

Before beginning the placements in February 2018, students attended about 18 hours of training which included a presentation on food insecurity at CUNY, a Food Advocacy 101 training that addressed the current state of federal food programs which included guest speakers from the College and University Food Bank Alliance, and the Hunter College Welfare Rights Initiative.



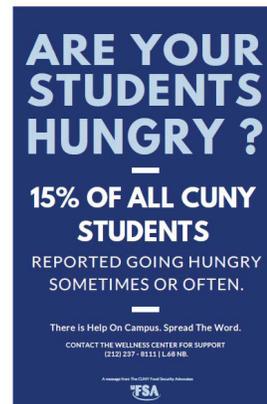
Food Security Advocated from John Jay and Hostos gather for a certificate ceremony at the CUNY School of Public Health in June. Depicted from left to right: Arlenny Cruz, Joel Rivera, Lazare Dada, Prof. Jan Poppendieck, Alyssa Clarke, Laura Blackwood, Emilie Quinones, Stephanie Veras, Kathleen Delgado, Raquel Guadalupe, Prof. Robert Garot, Malaine Clarke. On the bottom: Namizata Kamagate, Ronnette Cox, and Marleny Pimentel Perez.

John Jay College

At John Jay College, the Food Security Advocates worked on a variety of projects through collaboration with programs and services already offered to address food security and related issues on campus. Anchored by the John Jay Wellness Center and Single Stop offices, students worked on their own or with their classmates to bring information and resources on food security to their peers. By the end of the Spring 2018 semester, John Jay Food Security Advocates had made more than 1,200 referrals for students to food assistance on campus. Students conducted classroom presentations, student group and club presentations, and hosted a table at the John Jay Wellness Fair. They also sponsored the first ever Food Justice Expo. Because of their presence on campus, the campus cafeteria vendor pledged to donate 5,000 meals to hungry students throughout the following academic year. Today, the Food Security Advocates are working to form a club and will continue the development of the Food Justice Alliance on campus.

Here are some examples of their work:

John Jay students developed print and media campaigns in collaboration with the Wellness Center and placed posters around the campus to raise awareness of campus food insecurity and campus food pantry services. The Wellness Center adopted these posters and pledged to continue printing them and placing them around the campus to raise student awareness of food insecurity and food security resources on campus.



Some of the posters that students created at John Jay.

Students participated in outreach efforts on campus in different ways. Some hosted a table with resource materials alongside the Wellness Peer Program at John Jay. They distributed a pamphlet listing the food services available on their campus. Food Security Advocates used e-tablets to facilitate on-the-spot enrollment in SNAP assistance. They also participated in the Wellness Fair, an afternoon filled with food samples, raffles, and resources for students addressing various areas of wellness including nutrition, food access, and health insurance. Food Security Advocates raised money to support the breakfast and lunch program at John Jay, a Wellness Center initiative that connects food insecure students with free breakfasts and lunches. Toward the end of the semester, students organized the first John Jay Food Expo, where they gave testimonials on food advocacy, asked trivia questions on food insecurity and food programs, and fed more than 100 students through a catered lunch donated by Single Stop. Other John Jay programs that participated in the Expo were the Wellness Center, Community Outreach and Service Learning, the Women's Center for Gender Justice, and others.

Hostos Community College

At Hostos, Food Security Advocates investigated the ways that food insecurity affected their lives as students. They learned about resources that address food insecurity on campus by attending tours and information sessions coordinated with Single Stop, the Wellness Center, Metropolitan Food Services, and the Hydroponic tower gardens in the Natural Sciences department at Hostos. Once students understood the resources at their disposal, they went to work. At the end of the Spring 2018 semester, Hostos Food Security Advocates had made more than 300 referrals for food assistance programs on campus. In addition, Food Security Advocates attended the Just Food Conference at Columbia University Teacher's College, and the Green Thumb Conference hosted by the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation at Borough of Manhattan Community College, giving them exposure to others working to promote food security.

Hostos Food Security Advocates were challenged to better understand food insecurity on their campus by using a photo-voice project to answer two questions: (1) "What does food insecurity mean to college students?" and (2) "What does food justice mean to college students?" In their interpretations and presentations, they made this connection real for members of the audience and encouraged other students to think about hunger and poverty on a global scale in addition to viewing it locally. One of the phrases repeated through the night was, "Hunger has no face", and that it could affect anyone at any time.



From left to right: Joel Rivera, Namizata Kamagate, Kathleen Delgado (coordinator), Lazare Dada, and Arlenny Cruz Feliz present their photo-voice projects.

In summer 2018, Hostos Food Security continued to explore community resources, and applied for Health Bucks, \$2 coupons from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene that are valid for the purchase of fruits and vegetables. Food Security Advocates developed a program and distributed nearly 100 Health Bucks coupons to students on campus.



Hostos Food Security Advocates Raquel Melendez, Mattherson Cabrera, and Marleny Pimentel Perez hosted tours of the Lincoln Hospital Farmers' Market from Hostos Community College.



PART 6—FINDING OTHER PARTNERS FOR PROMOTING FOOD SECURITY AT CUNY

In the previous sections, the Guide has described some of the CUNY and community-based programs that have already begun work on promoting food security at CUNY. In the months and years ahead, other partners will be needed to assist in reaching the goal of ending food insecurity at CUNY by 2023. These include:

- *CUNY food pantries* will need more support to provide more and healthier food to students in need and to expand their outreach and education efforts.
- *CUNY Single Stops* will need higher levels of staffing and expanded outreach and education in order to bring their vital services to more students in need
- *CUNY wellness and mental health counseling programs* provide a variety of health, mental health, wellness and other services and often serve students who have other problems that can contribute to food insecurity such as depression, partner violence or housing instability. These programs need more staff, more resources, more space and more robust education and outreach programs
- *Community food security programs* already provide millions of hungry or food insecure New Yorkers with food but need more volunteers, more resources, and expanded support for increasing the volume and quality of food they distribute.
- *CUNY Student Senate and other student organizations* bring a student voice to CUNY governance and reach students in ways that faculty and staff do not and can bring their passion and commitment to the task of ending food insecurity.
- *Food vendors selling food on campus* need to be encouraged to see their services not just as a business or a revenue stream for the university but also as a resource for ensuring CUNY students have access to healthy, affordable food and as organizations who can play a role in ending food insecurity at CUNY
- *Food producing projects at CUNY* grow food on several campuses and can contribute to supplying fresh, healthy food but will need administrative and financial support to expand and sustain these efforts.
- *University administrators* including presidents and their staff, Trustees and the Chancellor and staff are now aware of the problem of student food insecurity

but need encouragement to take up the goal of ending food insecurity at CUNY by 2023 and to commit the resources and administrative attention needed to achieve and sustain that goal.

- *City, state and federal elected officials* set the policies that influence food security in New York City and need to better understand the face of food insecurity at CUNY and the actions they can take to end it.
- *CUNY faculty and staff* who want to contribute to ending food insecurity at CUNY in five years can play a vital role in enlisting these and other partners in strengthening CUNY's response to food insecurity.

PART 7—MOBILIZING CUNY TO END FOOD INSECURITY IN FIVE YEARS

No single solution will end food insecurity for all CUNY students by 2023. But we believe that by mobilizing faculty, staff, students and administration around a multi-pronged approach, we can achieve this goal. Our vision for ending food insecurity considers the diversity of its causes as well as our students' diverse needs. Our approach draws on existing federal, state, non-profit and university resources available for addressing food insecurity. However, we recognize that these resources are not enough to eradicate hunger, either for our students or for New York City residents more generally. Given this reality, we envision a broad mobilization of many constituencies to encourage all levels of policy makers to make ending food insecurity at CUNY a personal and institutional goal. By leveraging external and university resources to more fully meet our students' food needs, CUNY can help our students to thrive as scholars and active citizens. It can also translate into reality its pledge to be the world's best urban university.

Hunger should never be a barrier to achieving an education and we believe CUNY can become a national model for eradicating this particular barrier to student retention and success. Our approach builds on several university wide initiatives, including expanding SNAP enrollment among our students, implementing a low-cost meal program on all CUNY campuses, and rethinking campus food pantries as entry points to connect students to more sustainable resources for alleviating food insecurity.



Administrative leaders at John Jay attend the Food Justice Expo and express support for student food security.

Image Credit:
Kathleen Delgado

1—Expanding SNAP enrollment

SNAP, commonly referred to as food stamps, is a federal program that helps low income households purchase food. Many CUNY students who are eligible for the program are not enrolled. The application process for SNAP can be complicated and difficult to navigate. The Single Stop offices on many CUNY campuses do an excellent job of screening students to see if they are eligible for SNAP and assisting them in the enrollment process. The efforts of the Single Stop offices could be greatly enhanced by an institutional commitment to achieving food security for all CUNY students in several ways. First, we believe all CUNY campuses should have a Single Stop office with staff dedicated to enrolling students in public benefits programs, including SNAP. Single Stop could develop procedures to have students complete a comprehensive basic needs assessment at the start of each semester. Second, we believe that the efforts of the Single Stop offices could be enhanced by student and faculty food security advocates working to connect students with resources on their campuses in place to address food insecurity. Single Stop offices should be empowered to hire federal work study students to raise awareness of food insecurity on campus among their peers and assist in enrolling eligible students.

Enrolling more of our students in SNAP could significantly reduce levels of food insecurity on our campuses. However, not all of our students are eligible for SNAP. Many of our food insecure students may live in households that do not meet the income restrictions for the SNAP program. Others are not eligible because of their citizenship status. Even for those who are eligible, SNAP is often not enough to prevent food insecurity because the benefit amounts are so low and the cost of living in New York City is so high.

2—Expanding access to affordable meals on campus

One of the more direct ways CUNY could reduce food insecurity among our students is to provide inexpensive, healthy meals for all students on campus. We imagine campuses where all students have access to a healthy, filling meal at a nominal cost in order to support their learning. We know that K-12 lunch and breakfast programs significantly reduce food insecurity for school aged children and their families. Universities outside of the United States routinely provide affordable on-campus meals to students to support their learning. For example, some universities in Ecuador, Chile and Mexico provide subsidized healthy hot meals to college students.¹⁶ CUNY could be a national leader in addressing campus food insecurity by working with campus food services to expand access to affordable meals on campus. Students who cannot afford the nominal fee should be subsidized through student support services. We envision a program where students could access tokens through on-campus food pantries to buy a meal in the dining service used by all students. The recent release of a new RFP for university wide food vendors offers an opportunity to add food security to the goals of the CUNY food system.

3—Rethinking Campus Food Pantries

Over the past few years, we have seen an increase in the number of food pantries on campus. These institutions play an important role in addressing the acute, immediate needs of food insecure students. We believe campus food pantries have an important role to play as entry points for connecting students to more sustainable resources to address food insecurity. Food pantries are often the first point of contact between food insecure students and university resources.

Campus pantries can operate as hubs for screening and enrolling eligible students in SNAP, publicizing low cost meals on campus, and subsidizing on-campus meals for students who cannot afford even a nominal fee.

These proposals provide a starting point for achieving the goal of ending food insecurity at CUNY. We invite others inside and outside CUNY to contribute other ideas for helping CUNY to realize this goal. We also invite suggestions for creating effective campus-based, university-wide and city-wide mechanisms to plan and implement strategies, monitor progress, and share our findings with others.

PART 8—RESOURCES FOR FACULTY

We suggest a few resources for more information about food insecurity on college campuses for faculty and staff who want to learn more. At the Healthy CUNY website, we also include sample class syllabi, a more comprehensive reading list and contact lists for CUNY food security programs.

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