

Andrew Connolly  
Andrewmc2401  
[AC750818@ohio.edu](mailto:AC750818@ohio.edu)  
Ohio University

Ohio University is located in the Appalachia region, one of the poorest, and disadvantaged regions in the nation. The region has been hit by financial hardships for decades, stripping the region of wealth and opportunity. Thus, many of the students who are fortunate to attend the school, are financially insecure, thus food insecure. According to the Ohio University Foundation, 29% of students in 2017 reported low or very low food security. That means on average 3 out of every 10 students are skipping meals, reducing portion sizes, or not eating all together in a single day. (<https://ohiofoundationreport.org/blog/2019/07/03/food-pantry/>) Though Ohio University composts food waste and leftovers, it does have a variety of other programs set up to help students facing insecurities and hard times.

The Bobcats helping Bobcats program consists of a series of programs and food banks that serve O.U. (<https://www.ohio.edu/student-affairs/dean-of-students/bobcats-helping-bobcats>) The Cats Cupboard is food pantry on campus that provides students access to fresh or frozen foods on campus. It accepts donations year round. The Meal Bank is a part of this, in which through a swipe share program, students can donate some of their meal swipes to be distributed to those in need. Those students in need then receive swipes for the dining halls on campus. Emergency Micro Grants are also available for students experiencing temporary hardship. It serves to aid in them providing for themselves, without forcing students to take out loans. The SNAP program is run by the state and enables those students who work and still cannot afford all the necessities to receive aid.

Ohio University also has a student run program called Thursday Supper in which students host two free meals a week for the greater Ohio University community, in order for those in need to know they have to healthy, fresh meals during the week. This organization provides a constant that those in need can use. The stability aids them in recovering from the hardship.

Thus Ohio University does have a solid plan to address food insecurity on campus, in a manner that provides easy aid to students. I would be interested in volunteering at the food bank on campus. I am looking into how to reach out to them, as their website has no contact information, but I believe my academic advisor may be able to guide me. I also feel like I can do more.

This information I have gathered has touched me, and made me realize how lucky I am to come from such a privileged area where I have to worry not about my next meal. When I go home for winter break I intend to try to collect food to bring back with me to campus to donate to the food bank. In the four weeks I am home I have the opportunity to gather an assortment of food and drive it back out to Ohio with me. We all have an obligation to our fellow humans, and planet, and I feel a need to help my fellow students.