

Kenneth Wan
Username: kennywan
Email: iikennyii@gmail.com
School: Adlai E. Stevenson High School
Lincolnshire, Illinois

I have been aware of food waste issues from documentaries I have watched, websites that I have browsed, and from my APES class, however, I have never been made aware of food insecurity at schools. While at my particular school, food insecurity is not an issue, as our school offers packages to kids that cannot afford to have sufficient food every day, the article about college students around the world facing food insecurity really opened my eyes up to the issue. I could not imagine being in the position of some of the people, who literally only had a can of soup to eat for the entire day. It blew my mind learning that “46 percent of community college students and 36 percent of university students struggle to pay for housing and utilities,” which is almost half of the college population is faced with this food insecurity issue, but there is so much food around them being thrown away and wasted. Even in my own state, the number of college students who suffer from food insecurity “At four state universities in Illinois...is 35 percent.” I think in the mask of the food courts and many small restaurants that are prevalent in most schools and college campuses, there hides a substantial amount of people who are struggling to make ends meet, and who do not have the resources to get nutritious food every day. This is something that I have just been made fully aware of, and is something that needs to be solved. While there has been action, like UMich opening an on-campus pantry, that does not solve underlying causes of the issue, but is a step forward.

This issue interacts with many identities and social statuses, such as gender, race, income, etc. In the article, research suggests that “students have fewer ways to provide for themselves: Competition for low-wage jobs has increased, and strict work requirements for food stamp recipients mean that many cannot rely on the federal safety net.” Not only has competition been increased for jobs and food stamp recipients, but for many jobs, many races and genders are discriminated against, sadly, and are not given equal opportunities as other races or genders who apply for the same job. Also, many of these people who struggle with food insecurity have lower socioeconomic status, which is an underlying cause of this issue. That is why we need to change the way we think about our students, and how everyone should have equal opportunity. Furthermore, in the other article, from the graph, one could acknowledge that food insecurity rates, housing insecurity rates, and homelessness rates were higher for students who identified as transgender, gay or lesbian, or bisexual, or who did not identify as male, female, or transgender, than they were for students identifying as male, female, or heterosexual/straight. American Indian or Alaskan Native and Black students were the most likely ethnic groups to be food insecure or housing insecure, and American Indian or Alaskan Native students were also the most likely to be homeless. This shows the interconnection between identity, such as gender, and race as well, with food insecurity. The survey data proves this, which shows the correlation.

One organization that is based very close to me, in Illinois, is an organization that I volunteer for, which is called Feed6. They package food that they receive from donations or that they use donated money to buy and they send it to children all across Northern Illinois. This food is given to people ranging from small children, students, parents to seniors. They do a great job of providing lots of meals for students and other people that live in Northern Illinois. If you want to help, you can always volunteer to pack food, as that is what ends up being distributed to the

kids. You can also donate money to help them buy the food, which is probably the safer option during these times.