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I'm unaware of the extent of food insecurity on campus at my school, although during orientation, we were made aware of the on-campus food pantry that serves both students and community members. Most students on campus are living a very busy lifestyle, especially those who need to work in order to pay for college. This makes it more difficult to get to the dining hall and eat, even if they do have meal swipes. I think there is a much broader focus on how students at Grinnell can help those in the local community deal with food insecurity than on students who may be experiencing the same issues. In fact, one of the only places that I could find mentioning students experiencing food insecurity was a [2018 blog post](#) on a professor's website, acknowledging that food insecurity may impact students' academic success. Evidently, the dining hall closes over winter break, leaving the school's high population of international students without a secure way to access food, which can be a problem for low-income students.

Food insecurity is more common in individuals with lower income, people in minority racial and ethnic groups, and, on my campus, international students. This indicates that food access on campus is another barrier for low-income and minority students to overcome to achieve equality in higher education.

Grinnell College has a chapter of the Food Recovery Network, which brings excess food from the dining hall to community members in need, and a group who prepare "[Tiger Packs](#)" of nutritious food for local elementary, middle, and high school students. The primary support organization for students who need access to food is the [Chaplain's Office Food Pantry](#), which is a part of the Center for Religion, Spirituality, and Social Justice. There is also a student [emergency fund](#), which may not directly pay for food, but it can relieve some of the other financial pressures which cause students to be food insecure.

I think having more education about this issue would be a good step towards a solution. As the article about food insecurity stated, many students simply don't know the options available to them, like SNAP. Teaching students what food insecurity is, as well as the resources available to combat it, would empower students by giving them somewhere to turn when they are having problems. I like the idea of donating meal swipes, since most students don't use all of theirs, but most people are also so busy that they are unable to go to the dining hall for every meal.

Including a short session about food insecurity during New Student Orientation would be helpful to prevent students from feeling lost in the future. Additionally, the CRSSJ could hold an informational session about SNAP and other available programs for low-income and first generation students. To help low-income students who have to stay in Grinnell over winter and summer breaks, the college could develop a program that would issue Grinnell Bucks (money that can be spent in local stores and restaurants in town) to students in need in place of their regular meal plans. Finally, the Food Recovery Network could issue a statement welcoming

students who need it to get help from their services, since there is definitely a lack of recognition of food insecure students on campus.

The infographic is titled "Food Insecurity On Campus" and is divided into several sections. At the top left, a large orange circle contains the title. To its right, a yellow circle states "30% of students experience food insecurity at least once while in college." Further right, a small text box defines food insecurity: "Food Insecurity is defined as a lack of consistent access to enough food for a healthy, active, lifestyle." Below these are three green circles: one for BIPOC students (75% higher rate), one for international students (lack of dining hall access), and one for low-income/financially independent students (most at risk). A dark red section titled "Solutions" lists various strategies like using SNAP, food pantries, and meal swipes. It also provides contact information for MICA Food Pantry and the Chaplain's Office. At the bottom, it lists sources: healthaffairs.org and The Ahrens Foundation.

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Food Insecurity On Campus

30% of students experience food insecurity at least once while in college.

Food Insecurity is defined as a lack of consistent access to enough food for a healthy, active, lifestyle.

For BIPOC students, this rate is even higher-- up to 75%.

International students and others staying over winter and summer breaks often don't have access to the dining hall.

Low-income and financially independent students are the most at risk.

Solutions

Many food insecure students aren't aware of the resources available to them, like SNAP, local food pantries, and other assistance.

Some colleges also have programs that allow students to donate their meal swipes to those who need them.

Educating all students about options to combat food insecurity will empower them to find help when they need it.

While not a long term solution, temporary assistance is available in Grinnell.

Talking about food insecurity can also reduce the stigma that prevents people from reaching out for help.

MICA Food Pantry:
609 4th Avenue
641-236-3923

Chaplain's Office
Food Pantry:
CRSSJ Building

Sources: healthaffairs.org, The Ahrens Foundation

corinnne.f We don't really talk about fellow students who are experiencing food insecurity, but many of us will grapple with that... more

Caption: We don't really talk about fellow students who are experiencing food insecurity, but many of us will grapple with that during college.

So, let's talk about it, and ask Grinnell College to address food insecurity in its student population!

#pgc2022 @turninggreenorg @foodprintorg @foodtank