

## **Project Green Challenge 2023 – Day 24 Greenest Category**

**Los Aprendices – Conrado Manuel Guzmán Flores, Conradogf, (ASU Masters in Sustainability Leadership Program), Mexico City.**

### **Is this an issue that you are aware of at your school?**

Yes, it's an issue that the school itself has addressed. It became more notorious in 2017 after a student led investigation demonstrated ASU was not the exception to US colleges and universities wide statistics. The problem became more evident with the Covid pandemic and ASU is undertaking different approaches to the situation. From student led pantries to facilitate access to SNAP information and help to fill out a subscription.

### **How does food insecurity interact with identities such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status? What does this reveal about the intersection between food and justice?**

As a student I have been tremendously privileged and greatly supported by my parents throughout my education. During my first graduate degree I had a full scholarship, so I didn't pay for that degree, and I was given a monthly aid. I've been very lucky.

But that's not the case for everyone, underrepresented and marginalized students struggle here in Mexico and in the US. Indigenous, LGBT+, and low-income student populations really struggle when they don't have support from their parents either because of abandonment or inability. It's demonstrated that a college degree improves future welfare for professionals, but for many it's rather and unfair race, and many drop because of lack of access to food and other resources. The university in my hometown in Mexico has a graduation percentage for bachelor's degrees of 40%, I was appalled when I learned this.

### **Research an organization on your campus or in the community that is working to address food justice / insecurity. Tell us about this organization and how it supports students. What can you do as an individual to support that work? If there is no group at your school actively working to provide food access, try to find one at another school/university.**

The [Pitchfork Pantry](#) is an ASU student led organization that addresses food insecurity, they are mentored and helped by the University Senate, and the College of Health Solutions. They have 8 locations, 6 on campus and 2 in the city that open on various schedules throughout the week.

Being an online student there's little I can do, but raising awareness and promoting them is a good start.

### **What are some viable solutions that address the issue with success?**

- Facilitation and information for SNAP application.
- Basic Needs Hub that checks on health, housing needs, and sometimes has a food bank.
- Campaigns to gather unused, unspoiled foods from students and the community for donation through the pantry.
- Boosting of federal education funding and supporting associated legislation.

### **How can you apply and implement these solutions at your school?**

These are the solutions applied at ASU. Other long term solutions include:

- Identify food security early on through the admissions process, particularly those associated to intersectoral vulnerabilities.
- Support, request, and raise awareness among all student led organizations with trainings on how to identify food insecurities among students or members, give information about solutions on campus, and ask if they could start their own pantries in collaboration with the main pantry, get volunteers.
- The university must fight stigma around food insecurity, particularly among vulnerable communities, and say loud and clear that food insecurity is not an identity but a situation that everyone can encounter at some point in their lives. In other words, do a strong communications campaign.
- Demand legislation around the issue.

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