
A Call to Action: How Social Work Programs Can Respond to Student Food Insecurity

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The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated student food insecurity on college campuses and exposed the vulnerability of institutions with no food emergency response. During the COVID-19 pandemic and for years to come, the need for social work to lead efforts on college campuses to address student food insecurity is even greater. The need will continue to be significant for social workers in higher education to support students with basic needs, including resources for food, housing, childcare, and transportation. As has been true after other pandemics and economic downturns, professionally trained social workers are critical to brokering resources for individuals in crisis. This article critically examines the role of social work education in addressing the issue of student food insecurity. Through a conceptual lens, it explores the many dimensions of this problem and highlights vital contributions that social work can make within a higher education setting to alleviate food insecurity, enhance student well-being, and promote equitable opportunities for academic success.

KEY WORDS: *college campus; food insecurity; social work education; student support*

In the United States, academics and administrators working in higher education have become increasingly concerned about the prevalence of food insecurity on college campuses in response to a growing awareness of the issue. Very little is known about the impact of food insecurity and educational outcomes for college students (Cady, 2014). Previous studies highlighted that students with lower grade point averages are more likely to experience food insecurity (Beam & Johnson, 2023; Maroto et al., 2015; S. M. Martinez et al., 2018).

Prior to the start of COVID-19, multiple studies indicated that food insecurity was a rising concern, especially in historically underrepresented student groups. However, food insecurity among college students has increased due to the pandemic and rising food prices. Social work programs can play a crucial role in addressing the issue of food insecurity on college campuses because of the training and values inherent to our profession. The existing research on food insecurity among college students is presented in the next section. This research focuses on the negative effects that food insecurity can have on students' overall well-being as well as the implication for academic success. In this article, we explore the connection between the role of social work in higher education and the issue of food insecurity among students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Addressing food insecurity on college campuses has become an important issue in recent years. While there may not be specific literature on the gap in social work education assisting in addressing food insecurity on college campuses, there is ample research and literature available on the broader topic of food insecurity in higher education. Prior research studies indicate that between 19 percent and 42 percent of college students are food insecure, with estimates ranging from 17 percent to 42 percent (Dubick et al., 2016; Freudenberg et al., 2011; S. M. Martinez et al., 2018). These studies highlight the prevalence of food insecurity among college students. In addition, several studies conducted by academic institutions looked at the prevalence of food insecurity on their respective campuses. For instance, researchers from the City University of New York (CUNY) found that approximately 40 percent of the university's 274,000 students experienced food insecurity at some point in their education (Freudenberg et al., 2011). Further, the findings of this study revealed that 45 percent of students indicated they "often" or "sometimes" worried about whether they would have sufficient funds for food. In a separate study, S. M. Martinez et al. (2018) collected data from students attending any 10 campuses that make up

the University of California system. The data revealed that out of a total of 8,932 students, 42 percent reported being unable to afford food for themselves or their families. More specifically, [S. M. Martinez et al. \(2018\)](#) discovered that approximately 19 percent of the student body experienced “very low” food security, while the remaining 23 percent experienced “low” food security. These findings suggested that approximately 42 percent of students experienced a reduced diet quality or disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake in the previous 12 months due to limited resources ([S. M. Martinez et al., 2018](#)). Students struggling to access affordable healthy food choices exemplifies the issue of limited resources. In another study, [Dubick and colleagues \(2016\)](#) found that 48 percent of students reported having experienced food insecurity within the preceding 30 days, and about 22 percent of those students reported having very low levels of food security.

Food Insecurity and Students of Color

Research at the national level suggests that specific populations and subgroups experience food insecurity at greater rates. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture ([USDA, 2023](#)), food insecurity varied among household types and was considerably more prevalent for students with financial limitations and students of color, especially in non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic households. Given that food insecurity on college campuses is higher than the national average, it is reasonable to assume that underrepresented students are also at an increased risk of food insecurity. The studies reviewed for this article focused on the race and ethnicity of pantry participants ([Chaparro et al., 2009](#); [Dubick et al., 2016](#); [Freudenberg et al., 2011](#); [Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018](#)). In one study, [Cady \(2014\)](#) noted that food insecurity disproportionately impacts populations that are already underserved on college campuses, including Black, Latino, LGBTQ, and female students, particularly female students with children. Social work professionals and students can play a vital role in identifying equitable resources on and off campus to support this student population.

A recent review of the literature on food insecurity in college populations found that students of color experience food insecurity at higher rates than other student populations ([Chaparro et al., 2009](#); [Dubick et al., 2016](#); [Freudenberg et al., 2011](#)). [Dubick et al. \(2016\)](#) examined approximately 1,800 students who

reported having experienced food insecurity. When analyzing responses by race, the results showed that food insecurity was more prevalent among students of color. For example, [Dubick et al.](#) found that students who identified as Hispanic/Latino or Black/African American were more likely to be food insecure. Similar results were noted in a study by [Freudenberg et al. \(2011\)](#), which suggested that certain populations at CUNY experienced higher food insecurity rates than others. Researchers found that Black and Latino students were about 1.5 times more likely to experience food insecurity than White and Asian students ([Freudenberg et al., 2011](#)). [Chaparro et al. \(2009\)](#), like [Dubick et al. \(2016\)](#) and [Freudenberg et al. \(2011\)](#), found similar differences between racial and ethnic groups and the issue of food insecurity in higher education. Their study found that students who identified as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Filipino, and more than one ethnicity were more likely to be food insecure and, in some cases, 13 times more likely to experience it when compared with the most food-secure student population ([Chaparro et al., 2009](#)). Overall, these studies are consistent with other published research that examined disparities of food insecurity among underrepresented populations.

[Goldrick-Rab et al. \(2018\)](#) echo similar findings on race/ethnicity and food insecurity. They concluded a noticeable disparity in food insecurity by race/ethnicity. Most concerning about their findings was that approximately 50 percent of Black students from their sample reported they were food insecure. This percentage is even greater (54 percent) when community college students report ([Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018](#)). [Goldrick-Rab et al. \(2018\)](#) noted that Black and Hispanic students were, respectively, 1.6 and 1.4 times more likely to experience food insecurity than White students. As the research illustrates, there exists a significant racial disparity in food insecurity among college students.

Financial Limitations of Students and Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is a worrying issue among students with financial difficulties. [Broton et al. \(2014\)](#) found that students with financial struggles face difficult compromises to make ends meet. These students may forgo a meal or fail to meet basic needs such as safe and reliable housing to remain in school. Some students may turn to public assistance to cover

food, housing, and other living expenses. However, college students are often precluded from many widely used public assistance programs for low-income individuals. Though some students may meet other qualifying requirements for public assistance, research shows that the issue of food insecurity still occurs, despite receiving help. [Dubick et al. \(2016\)](#) argued that food insecurity was not eliminated among students with financial struggles despite efforts to increase awareness of government assistance programs. Dubick and colleagues found 61 percent of food insecure students also received at least one type of social service in the past year. Their findings regarding support programs were also accurate for students who received financial aid. Among food-insecure students, 75 percent received some form of financial aid, such as Pell Grants or student loans. In a similar study by [Broton et al. \(2014\)](#), researchers noted concerns associated with the increasing costs of college attendance and living expenses, and the decreasing financial aid and number of adult students who sought food assistance. These findings underscore the serious sacrifices students make to remain in college.

Food Insecurity during and post-COVID-19

Many researchers have explored risk factors associated with food insecurity in higher education. Several studies published before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic have established that college students experienced food insecurity during college, especially historically minoritized student groups. [Owens et al. \(2020\)](#) stated that food-insecure college students are more likely to be younger, Black or Hispanic, low-income, employed, receiving financial aid, and housing insecure. So far, however, there has yet to be much discussion about the impact of food insecurity on college students since the start of the pandemic. [Mialki et al. \(2021\)](#) surveyed 3,206 undergraduate and graduate students at a large public university to determine their food security status before and after the onset of COVID-19. The study revealed that many college students experienced a shift in food security after the onset of COVID-19, which may be related to the closure of college campuses, changes in housing situation, or changes in employment ([Mialki et al., 2021](#)). [Owens et al. \(2020\)](#) used a cross-sectional design to survey 502 undergraduate and graduate students across three campuses of a large, diverse, state-funded university in Texas. Owens et al. found that compared with

White students, Black, Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islander students had greater odds of being food insecure during COVID-19 ([Owens et al., 2020](#)). More specifically, younger, undergraduate, and minoritized students (including Black, Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islander) were twice as likely to be food insecure ([Owens et al., 2020](#)). Owens et al. argued that these findings were consistent with recently published U.S. Census Bureau data, which showed that Black and Hispanic households with children were twice as likely to be food insecure compared with White families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, community college students may become more susceptible to food insecurity, which may affect their health, influence their perceptions of food insecurity and injustice in their lives, and prompt them to reevaluate the support they require from their community college ([Ahmed et al., 2022](#)). As college campuses transitioned to remote learning to ensure student safety and reduce the transmission of COVID-19, many students moved back in with their parents or experienced loss of wages due to under-/unemployment. [Mialki et al. \(2021\)](#) found over half of the participants (53.4 percent) had a change in housing after the onset of COVID-19, of which 88.6 percent moved in with their parents. Interestingly, moving home did not guarantee increased access to food, with 19.9 percent of students becoming less food secure and 17.9 percent becoming more food secure ([Mialki et al., 2021](#)). In another study, [Owens et al. \(2020\)](#) found that single-parent students were more likely to be food insecure and had over two times greater odds of food insecurity than students who lived alone. Although many households across the United States received temporary relief through stimulus checks and increased Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, many college students found themselves ineligible for those resources. According to a survey conducted by [The Hope Center \(2021\)](#), approximately half of the respondents who were facing challenges with meeting their basic needs had received some kind of public assistance within the year prior to the survey. The public assistance programs that were most commonly utilized by individuals experiencing basic needs insecurity included Medicaid or public health insurance, SNAP benefits, and unemployment compensation or insurance. However, the overall utilization rates remained relatively low, with less

than a quarter of students facing basic needs insecurity utilizing any specific public benefit (The Hope Center, 2021). Students enrolled in two-year programs who face basic needs insecurity are more than twice as likely to receive SNAP benefits compared with four-year students facing similar challenges, 24 percent and 10 percent, respectively. Inequitable access to campus and public support can arise due to issues such as administrative burden, stigma, and shame (The Hope Center, 2021). Without direct action, the situation is unlikely to improve in the short term, as eligibility for federal programs like SNAP ended on July 1, 2023. Unless students with the greatest need receive sufficient support, their likelihood of enrolling in college is diminished. Moreover, even if they do enroll, there is a higher possibility that they may discontinue their education (The Hope Center, 2021).

Even campus food pantries, designed to alleviate food insecurity among college students, were forced to close or reduce their hours due to COVID-19. Overall, these studies highlight the need for comprehensive and holistic student supports to combat food insecurity among college students. Access to nutritious food is a human right. The social work profession upholds social justice through empowerment, advocacy, and a case management approach to holistically support vulnerable populations. Now more than ever, the training and values demonstrated by social work students and professionals are necessary to adequately support students experiencing many social and economic hardships and food insecurity.

Impact of Food Insecurity on Academic Success

Insufficient access to food and resources for food is linked to many unfavorable outcomes for college students. These outcomes include poor academic performance, increased anxiety, and physical and mental health decline (Beam, 2020; Meza et al., 2019). Students at risk of not having enough food to eat are also more likely to be at risk of not having a safe place to live and having difficulty meeting basic needs like paying for housing and transportation (Haskett et al., 2021).

The issue of food insecurity on college campuses has been addressed in various ways, including the expansion of financial aid and other programs of state or federal subsidies, the establishment of campus food pantries and meal-sharing programs, and

the formation of partnerships with community organizations to increase the availability of food that is both affordable and nutritious. Education and awareness-raising campaigns have also begun to be implemented at some colleges and universities, with the goal of assisting students in developing a more effective response to the problem and the resources currently available.

Current research suggests that food insecurity is a significant problem among college students. It is essential to ensure that students have the adequate support they require to succeed academically and personally, and addressing this problem is essential to achieving this goal.

HIGHER EDUCATION RESPONSE

Addressing food insecurity at colleges and universities has been a gradual process. The College and University Food Bank Alliance (CUFBA), a national association that tracks and supports initiatives to reduce hunger, food insecurity, and poverty rates amongst college students (El Zein et al., 2018; Reppond et al., 2018), reported one known campus pantry in 2007. CUFBA (n.d., as cited in Redding et al., 2022, p. 2) reported over 700 members in 2020, a substantial increase since the original 88 members in 2012. The National Center for Education Statistics (2022) reported that in the 2020–2021 academic year, among Title IV degree-granting institutions, there were 1,294 two-year colleges and 2,637 four-year colleges. Despite limited scholarly research about the prevalence of food insecurity among college students, campus food pantries emerged across colleges and university campuses to address student hunger. As federal and state funding for higher education decreased during the 2009 recession, increased tuition costs diminished student support services (Reppond et al., 2018). Often initiated by faculty or staff, more than 500 campus pantries were registered with CUFBA in 2017; however, they frequently operated in isolation (Reppond et al., 2018).

El Zein et al. (2018) noted a gap in research regarding student knowledge of campus food pantries, their utilization for obtaining food, and how these pantries intersected with students' food security status. Consequently, the increase in university food pantries has shed some light on the issue of student food insecurity. El Zein et al. reported that the stigma associated with food insecurity is the main barrier to using a campus food pantry. For

instance, students experiencing food insecurity may be hesitant to use the campus pantry because they feel the service is meant to serve those with higher needs than their own (El Zein et al., 2018).

Strategies to combat the stigma and perceptions associated with utilizing a campus pantry include marketing strategies such as communicating that the pantry is a community resource for wellness compared with a resource that only provides food for students experiencing a food crisis. Establishing community resource centers on campus that promote wellness requires leadership and staff competent in providing support services such as case management, coaching, and counseling and informing students about equitable resources on and off campus while advancing social justice in policy and practice.

Research studies highlight how food insecurity is of concern for many college students, particularly students of color. The subsequent section will discuss why social work students and professionals are essential to developing, implementing, and delivering services, and evaluating campus food pantries.

ROLE OF SOCIAL WORK PROGRAMS

Social work students and professionals have the unique skills and training to respond to the growing concern of food-insecure students in higher education. Studies have demonstrated that social workers play a crucial role in linking food-insecure individuals with vital resources and support. For example, Fram et al. (2014) found that school social workers play a particular role in implementing initiatives to address student food insecurity in K–12 educational settings. They explain that school social workers can incorporate an ecological systems perspective into assessment efforts and utilize their knowledge to broker local resources to plan and respond to the needs of children and their families. These interventions may include enrolling in public assistance programs, such as SNAP, as well as housing, transportation, and utility assistance programs. Moreover, social workers have been instrumental in mitigating the psychological and emotional toll of food insecurity. M. J. Martinez and Kawam (2014) discuss the role of social workers in relation to inadequate nutritional intake among children and the delivery of emotional support to children exhibiting increased behavioral and cognitive difficulties due to food insecurity. These studies highlight the critical role of social workers in addressing the physical

and psychological aspects of food insecurity, thereby enhancing the well-being of children.

At the core of social work education and the profession, social work students and professionals are guided by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW, 2021) *Code of Ethics* regardless of their professional functions or settings. The code summarizes broad ethical principles that reflect the profession's core values and establishes specific ethical standards that should be used to guide social work practice. Social work professionals and students are instrumental in developing a campus pantry, delivering services, and evaluating the pantry operations through this guidance.

Social work programs are positioned to lead efforts on college campuses to respond to students' social and economic needs. Social work programs play a pivotal role in addressing food insecurity in higher education, and they must be involved in responding to students' basic needs. Social workers manage food pantries, help individuals with food assistance, and assist individuals in applying for SNAP benefits.

Social workers are essential to the well-being of young adults enrolled in colleges and universities, because they are able to assist students in both their academic endeavors and personal lives. Furthermore, social workers can leverage their work to partner with diverse individuals hailing from varying industries and fields. Their job scope also provides them with the chance to partake in program ideation, construction, and appraisal (NASW, 2011). Social workers in higher education have the unique opportunity to collaborate with professionals from various fields to identify, evaluate, and execute effective strategies and programs that promote the physical and mental well-being of students.

Developing a Campus Pantry

Before opening a campus food pantry, it is crucial to research and assess the prevalence of food insecurity in your campus community to determine if a food pantry is needed on campus. The prevalence and severity of food insecurity can be assessed by using the 10-item validated USDA Adult Food Security Survey Module. The questions cover a range of experiences, from worrying about food running out to not eating for a whole day because of a lack of resources to obtain food (El Zein et al., 2018). This survey tool is free and accessible on the USDA website. If interested, social work professionals and

students can engage with campus leadership and stakeholders to develop a task force focused on food insecurity to determine best practices for distributing the survey to the campus community.

Developing a task force with campus stakeholders is key to identifying the campus community's needs. Social work professionals and students lend their expertise in this phase as researchers, critical thinkers, and translators of research findings. According to the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE, 2022), social workers understand the principles of logic, scientific inquiry, and culturally informed and ethical approaches to building knowledge. Additionally, social workers are also knowledgeable about the processes for translating research findings into effective practice (CSWE, 2022). Involving social work professionals and students during this phase is crucial to understanding the prevalence of food insecurity on campus and determining appropriate intervention services during the planning phase.

Planning a Campus Pantry. Once it is determined that a campus food pantry is needed, naturally securing a space, developing policies and procedures, and obtaining food should come next. However, in this phase, the most important step is informing the campus community about the prevalence of food insecurity and advocating for resources to best support students in need. According to a report by the CUFBA and the Student Government Resource Center, the size and type of location for a food pantry will vary based on the available space, the level of need, and the available staffing resources at the institution. Further, the report explains that a larger and more representative sample of the student population must be surveyed and collected in order to determine the need for resources and the size of the food pantry.

The NASW *Code of Ethics* calls on social workers to advocate for living conditions conducive to the fulfillment of basic human needs and to promote social, economic, political, and cultural values and institutions that are compatible with the realization of social justice (NASW, 2021). Moreover, social work professionals and students should advocate for changes in policy and legislation to improve social conditions to meet basic human needs and promote social justice (NASW, 2021). Informing the campus community about this emerging issue and advocating for equitable and accessible resources is imperative to increasing campus and community support. It is necessary to establish campus and

community support because it increases marketing, fundraising efforts, and opportunities to recruit volunteers and obtain food through food drives throughout campus and local communities.

Implementation of Service Delivery at a Campus Pantry. The day-to-day operations of a campus food pantry will vary depending on the student population. Social work professionals and students can develop best practices for operating a campus food pantry based on the student population's needs in the development phase. Factors such as population served, included barriers around space, and funding can determine what a campus food pantry carries and what additional resources are offered. Campus pantries may carry perishable items such as produce, dairy, and/or nonperishable food items such as canned vegetables, toiletries including paper towels or toilet paper, and hygiene products such as soap and toothpaste. When social work professionals and students are involved in the day-to-day operations, they have the knowledge and expertise to apply case management techniques and critical thinking to provide adequate resources to support students experiencing basic needs insecurity such as housing and childcare (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018). By applying knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks social work professionals and students have the unique skill set to provide equitable and compassionate service to students experiencing food insecurity (CSWE, 2022). Compassionate and equitable service is vital because it aids in building trusting relationships among students that utilize the campus food pantry, which in turn leads to supporting students beyond providing food. Research findings underscore the financial challenges and sacrifices food-insecure students face to remain in college.

Evaluating Campus Pantry Operations. Sustaining a campus food pantry requires continuous monitoring and evaluation of practices and procedures. The code calls on social workers to promote and facilitate evaluation and research to contribute to the development of knowledge (NASW, 2021). Social work professionals and students understand that quantitative and qualitative methods are important in evaluating processes and outcomes to advance practice, policy, and service delivery effectiveness (CSWE, 2022). Social workers can improve practice effectiveness by applying evaluation findings at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels

(CSWE, 2022). For example, through evaluation, social work professionals and students can assess the additional resources needed to support the pantry participants best. Additional resources may include housing, healthcare, financial assistance, or mental health. Social work students are best positioned in this role to broker resources to other students as there is no one-size-fits-all scenario.

The utilization and effectiveness of campus food pantries to address food security among college students are primarily unknown (El Zein et al., 2018). Much of the scholarly research has focused on the prevalence of food insecurity on college campuses (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018), the rate of food insecurity on their campuses (Dubick et al., 2016; Freudenberg et al., 2011; S. M. Martinez et al., 2018), and sociodemographic factors of students experiencing food insecurity (Chaparro et al., 2009; Dubick et al., 2016; Freudenberg et al., 2011).

DISCUSSION

Addressing food insecurity in higher education requires competent and compassionate leaders that strive for social justice and equitable resources. On campus, social work educators and students can lead these efforts. In addition to playing a significant role in developing, planning, implementing, and evaluating campus food pantries, social work professionals and students can assist in advocating, informing, and normalizing the use of them in the campus community. For example, social work professionals can include the campus pantry in their syllabi, bringing awareness to the campus resource. Additionally, social work student organizations can organize food drives for the campus pantry, informing and educating the campus community about food insecurity and existing resources in the campus community. If a campus pantry is established, fostering a partnership with the social work program can create opportunities to support the campus community better. Social work students have the ability to advocate for policies that would improve the food security of college students.

Students majoring in social work have the ability to advocate for policies that would improve the food security of college students. Through practice-informed research, social work professionals and students acquire the knowledge and expertise needed to conduct meaningful research that could lead to developing a campus pantry that addresses the unique needs of the student population.

Through advocacy, social work professionals and students can inform the campus community of the prevalence of food insecurity among their students and develop intervention strategies that combat the stigma of utilizing a campus food pantry. In addition, social work professionals and students have the skill set to monitor and evaluate campus food pantry operations and that lends itself to improving policies and procedures that impact students experiencing food insecurity. These strategies can be helpful when developing a campus pantry or supporting an established campus pantry.

There are only a few scholarly articles that provide information about who currently manages and works in campus pantries. Twill et al. (2016) studied a campus pantry run by an outside volunteer agency, Volunteer in Service to America, while Redding et al. (2022) proposed utilizing human service students to manage campus pantries. Accessing campus pantry websites yielded more results in identifying who currently runs campus pantries. Searching 20 Midwest university campus pantry websites, 17 identified current staff, and less than half of those pantries partnered with social work departments or staffed social work students. Partnering with campus pantries and social work departments/programs is beneficial for the campus community and surrounding communities.

Although little is known about management and employees and the effectiveness of a campus pantry, social work professionals and students can aid in the research, data collection, and evaluation to identify gaps in service and increase awareness of this emerging and dire issue in higher education. Campus food pantry operations will benefit from the training, knowledge, and expertise social work professionals and students possess beyond providing food that ultimately supports student, campus, and community well-being. Additionally, further research is needed to explore the specific challenges faced by different student populations, such as first-generation students, international students, and students from nontraditional backgrounds. Further, it is important to explore additional roles of other university-based educational programs such as public health, counseling, and nutrition in their position to address student food insecurity.

Beyond Campus Pantries

Campus pantries can provide immediate relief to a food-insecure student. However, El Zein et al.

(2018) argued that solutions to students' food insecurity should not be limited to increasing accessibility to campus food pantries. El Zein et al. (2018) argued that additional strategies such as revising SNAP eligibility for college students and providing affordable meal plan rates to at-risk students who display poverty indicators, including Pell Grant recipients, are a few ways to increase food security among college students. Other strategies include establishing emergency grants to support students with unexpected financial hardship and institutional support services that connect students to local support resources, including housing, transportation, health and human services, and affordable childcare.

Participation in a meal donation program is another approach to addressing student food insecurity on a college campus. *Swipe Out Hunger* (n.d.) is a national nonprofit organization with the largest program in the country with 750 campus chapters. Students who have meal plans are given the opportunity to bank and transfer their meal swipes to others so that they can provide students who are in need with additional meals. In addition, a college campus may choose to form a partnership with the local community or with a student garden and may choose to either provide vouchers for fresh produce or provide farm space for individuals to cultivate and produce their own food.

Social work students and professionals can help address the problem of food insecurity among this population in a number of different ways, including working with members of the campus community as well as legislators to advocate for current SNAP policies to expand eligibility to include college students, partnering with local community organizations and community gardens, and introducing a meal donation program. The function and efficacy of social workers in campus food pantries merit additional research. We hope that this article will lend itself to the concept of university-based food pantries incorporating social work students and professionals into their operations. This would be in recognition of the unique skill set that social workers bring to the role and their capacity to bring about meaningful transformations in the lives of those most vulnerable to food insecurity.

CONCLUSION

In this article, we reviewed the literature on student food insecurity and discussed the strategy for addressing this issue by utilizing the social work

program that educational institutions offer. The rising awareness of food insecurity on college campuses has captured the attention of scholars and administrators in higher education across the United States. Several studies published before the onset of COVID-19 established that college students, particularly historically marginalized student groups, experienced food insecurity during college. Results of these studies highlight the problem of food insecurity among college students, the disparities that exist between students of color, the impact this problem has on students' academic success, and the urgency for efficient interventions. These findings discuss the prevalence of student food insecurity and associated factors that contribute to food insecurity, including financial limitations, the impact of COVID-19, and the stigma of seeking assistance.

Moreover, social work plays a crucial role in addressing student food insecurity. Social workers possess a distinct set of skills and knowledge that can be utilized to implement comprehensive and long-term strategies. Social work education has the potential to make a significant contribution toward solving food insecurity among students. Fostering community involves a variety of activities, including the planning, management, and evaluation of campus pantry programs, as well as the provision of support services, partnerships, and educating the community. Social work students, faculty, and staff serve more than just the community. They make a significant contribution to the overall success and wellness of their own institution. Due to the training and values of our profession, social work programs play a vital role in addressing students' food insecurity and other basic needs on college campuses.

In conclusion, addressing food insecurity among college students requires a comprehensive strategy involving collaboration between academic institutions, community organizations, and policymakers, utilizing the institution's existing social workers. By implementing evidence-based interventions, advocating for policy changes, and conducting additional research, we can reduce student food insecurity and create a more inclusive, supportive environment for all college students. **SW**

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