

Mercer addresses student **HUNGER** *with food pantry*

By Justin Willever
Senior Reporter

In a recent food access survey of 50 Mercer students, half reported that they had gone hungry because they didn't have money for food and 41% said they had qualified for state or federal food assistance programs.

The cost of student hunger is greater than just discomfort. A bill introduced in the NJ state Assembly on October 18, 2018 that expands student access to food stamps reads, "Food insecurity carries serious consequences for student success. In one study, the majority of students experiencing food insecurity reported missing classes and study sessions, and not buying required textbooks.

Hunger also impairs cognitive development into adolescence and adulthood, leading to poorer test scores and the inability to fully engage in classes."

A year ago The VOICE learned that the college aimed to help hungry students by establishing food pantries on both campuses, but information about where the pantries were located or if they even existed was conflicting.

Now, however, there are signs on bulletin boards reading "Help fight hunger on campus!" and announcing the opening of a Pantry on the Kerney campus in Trenton in Room KC403.

According to Bryan O'Neal who is Assistant to the Dean at the James Kerney Campus, the food pantry "should be up and running in two weeks...we will be opening up right before Thanksgiving".

The food pantry well on its way. It already contains items like Cup O' Noodles and cans of beans and is almost ready to be open.

As to how the food pantry will be stocked, it is currently up to the generosity of people who can afford to help.

Dr. Diane Campbell, Vice President of Student Affairs says the way to get food for the pantry will be through donations. She says "we will have a holiday party and as a part of coming to the holiday party, we will ask people to bring food donations."

In a flyer that was created by the school, they mention what types of food and supplies are needed. Nonperishable items are key. They mention needing oatmeal, fruit cups, peanut butter, and toiletries among other things.

Dr. Wang and Dr. Campbell say the only requirement for a student to receive help from the food pantry is that they be hungry. However, a form has also been created that asks for information such as a student identification number, address, and whether the student receives government benefits such as SNAP (food stamps).

Jennifer Famularo who asked for food support in the past and was given some direct help, says "when times were rough, the college was able to provide some food so I could continue to study."

**INFOGRAPH Statistical information is drawn from two surveys conducted by The VOICE in 2019. The first analyzed self reported data from 50 current students on the West Windsor campus. The second had 30 student respondents from each of the two campuses.*

50%



0% of Mercer students have gone hungry because they didn't have money for food*

The college has prepared information sheets about what the Food Pantry contains, a sign up for students requesting food, and a flyer describing how people can donate.

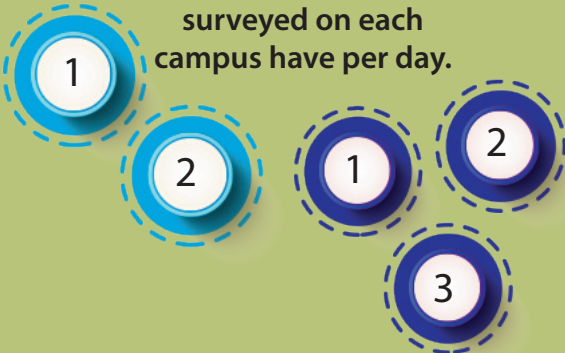
Food Pantry Information Documents Available

Find pdf versions of these documents at The VOICE website mcccvoice.org/hunger



Comparing Campuses

Average number of meals students surveyed on each campus have per day.



Students on Mercer's Trenton campus are facing higher levels of food insecurity. Percent of students surveyed from each campus who report that they receive state or federal food assistance.



Percent of students surveyed from each campus who say they worry that they might run out of food before they get more money.



Students at Mercer's Trenton campus are facing higher levels of food insecurity*

Percent of students surveyed from each campus who say they need to cut their meals or the size of their meals in order to save for other expenses.



● West Windsor
● Trenton



Mercer's new food pantry is located in KC403

41% of Mercer students have qualified for food stamps*