

WCU

WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY

Resource Pantry ANNUAL REPORT 2017-2018



RESOURCE PANTRY

According to a recent study performed by faculty and staff at WCU, Assessment of Food and Housing Security Among College Students at West Chester University, 31.7% of students on campus are facing food insecurity. This is similar to the national average found by the Wisconsin HOPE lab in April, which stated 36% of college students nationwide were food insecure in the last 30 days. The WCU Resource Pantry aims to decrease this number by eliminating barriers to degree completion for students facing financial hardships by providing access to resources, while empowering students to learn independent living skills and achieving long-term stability. In its first full year on campus, the pantry has grown exponentially, not only in the number of students served, but also in the number of programs offered, size of staff, and partnerships developed.



In the fall the pantry was relocated to a new location on the ground level of Commonwealth Hall with the Office of Service-Learning and Volunteer Programs. A First Anniversary Food Drive and Ribbon Cutting Ceremony, as well as Open House was held to commemorate this significant milestone. President Fiorentino and the Holveck Family, who were instrumental donors in the creation of the pantry, had the honor of cutting the ribbon and officially opening the doors to the WCU community.

With the new location came an extensive outreach plan, which included regular outreach to faculty, staff, student leaders, and community organizations. During this academic year the pantry served 300 new students, bringing the total number of students who have utilized the pantry since its inception to 365 students. That's more than a 462% increase in growth from 2016-2017. Additionally, there were 1,406 total visits to the pantry, which demonstrates students are visiting multiple times throughout the year. The pantry distributed 7,600 pounds of food to students facing food insecurity, in addition to providing basic needs such as school supplies, personal hygiene products, and professional and winter attire. The PACC AmeriCorps VISTA member increased awareness about the Resource Pantry by developing a consistent social media calendar, as well as implementing a weekly newsletter for students, faculty, staff, and donors. The VISTA member also worked with University Communications on a video project that provided a virtual tour of the pantry, which reached over 25,000 viewers.



The Pantry was awarded a national grant by the Corporation for National and Community Service to select another AmeriCorps VISTA member for an additional year. The VISTA member serves as a full-time, professional staff member, allowing the pantry to expand hours of operation from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday, with evening hours until 8:00 p.m. on Thursday. To accommodate the increased traffic and expanded hours the pantry student staff has tripled in size, with the ambassador team comprised of 10 federal work-study students.

As the pantry has grown it has become increasingly important to provide a level of care that includes supporting students' holistic needs; providing regular educational workshops on financial literacy (in partnership with Financial Aid) and career readiness (in partnership with Career Development Center). Other...

RESOURCE PANTRY

popular resources include, workshops offered by the Learning Assistance & Resource Center, as well as cooking demonstrations, where students learn how to prepare fresh produce from the south campus organic garden. Additionally, the Pantry hired a Master of Social Work Intern which expanded the Pantry's ability to serve student needs by establishing relationships with local social services & creating a referral resource binder, developing a workshop to educate students about how to apply for governmental assistance programs, and creating a case notes and referral tracking system for supporting students with deeper challenges.

Pantry staff are regularly developing partnerships and providing referrals to community organizations. The Chester County Food Bank has been instrumental in keeping the shelves stocked with non-perishable food items. Additional nonprofit partnerships include: First Presbyterian Church, who's congregants purchased a refrigerator, The Chester County Chamber of Commerce Grow Group, who purchased a freezer for the Pantry, The West Chester Food Cupboard, who worked with Pantry staff to organize trips for eligible students to access nutritional foods at their Cupboard in town, and Wings for Success, who coordinated shopping trips for female-identifying students to receive free professional attire.

This summer, the Pantry will undergo renovations which will increase storage capacity and improve the overall shopping experience. These improvements were made possible thanks to an incredibly generous gift from Pennsylvania State Employee Credit Union (PSECU) and Student Services Incorporated (SSI).

In an effort to create regular engagement opportunities for students interested in supporting the Resource Pantry, a new student organization sponsorship program was started. Organizations can coordinate a resource drive once a month, once a semester, or once a year, depending on the group's interest and capacity. During the spring, sponsorship plans were initiated with Alpha Phi Omega, Pi Kappa Alpha, and the Track and Field team.

As we look ahead to next academic year, we will welcome a new AmeriCorps VISTA member as the Resource Pantry Coordinator for the 2018-2019 academic year, as well as 6 new Pantry Ambassadors and a new Master of Social Work Intern. The Pantry will continue efforts to collaborate with organizations from the campus and local community, and identify ways to better support students facing basic needs and food insecurity.

10 Student Ambassadors **300** Individual Shoppers **7,600** lbs Food Distributed
38 Collection Drives **1,406** Shopping Visits **167** Individual Donors



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SOCIAL MEDIA

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MISSION STATEMENT

The WCU Resource Pantry eliminates barriers to degree completion for students with financial need by providing access to resources, while empowering students to learn independent living skills and achieve long-term stability.

WCU Resource Pantry

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