

White Paper: Overview of Food Insecurity on College Campuses and Recommendations

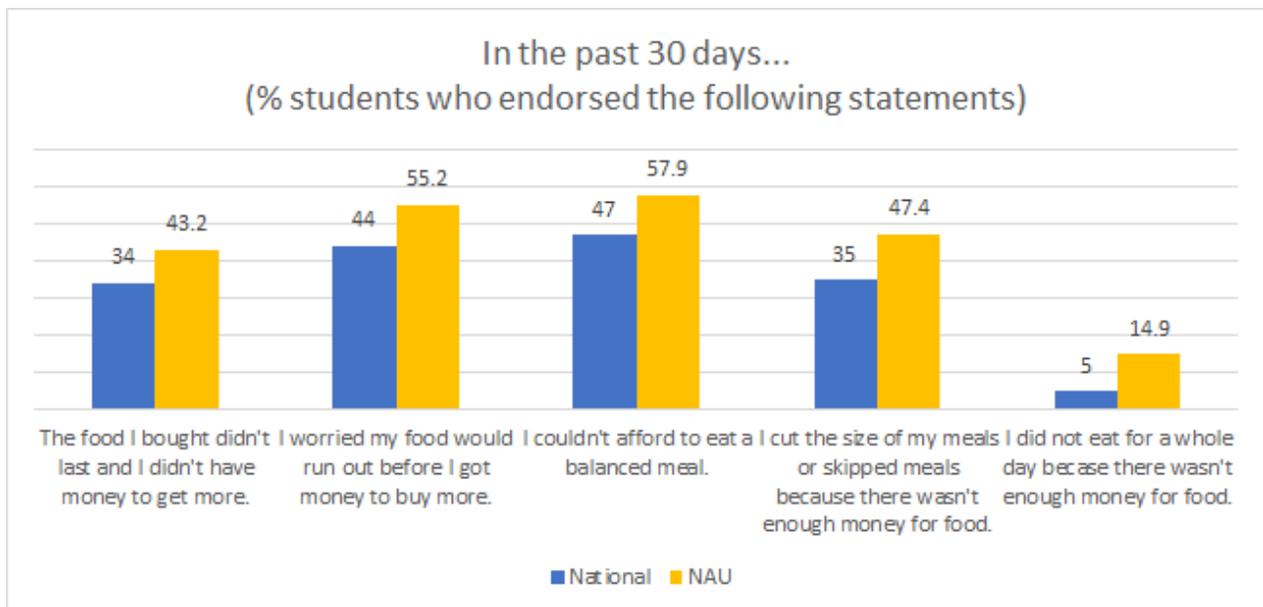
Updated November 2019

Background:

Per the USDA, “the defining characteristic of very low food security is that, at times during the year, the food intake of household members is reduced and their normal eating patterns are disrupted because the household lacks money and other resources for food.” (USDA, 2017). Students who are food insecure are nearly twice as likely as their food secure peers to experience depression (Bruening, 2018) and typically have lower GPAs than their food secure peers (Elzein et al., 2017; Maroto 2014).

Prevalence at NAU

A food insecurity survey was sent to a selection of full-time students on the Flagstaff mountain campus during the Spring of 2019. Respondents answered questions regarding their access to foods and their eating behaviors at mealtimes; these questions were modeled after the USDA Adult Food Security Survey. There were 567 completed surveys and responses were weighted to represent NAU’s mountain campus. The national comparison data below is from the College and University Basic Needs Insecurity April 2019 report.



In addition, students who tended to endorse the food insecurity statements on at least three or more items after weighting included

- Students with a cumulative GPA of 2.91 or below
- Students of color
- Students from the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
- Students working 21 to 30 hours each week.

Existing efforts at NAU's Mountain Campus:

Louie's Cupboard:

- This on-campus food pantry provides bi-weekly distributions of non-perishable foods to any members of the NAU community who self-identify as being food insecure (no data is collected with regards to income or hunger).
- Louie's Cupboard is staffed by volunteers and receives a large amount of its funding through food-drives and donations.
- During the 2018-2019 academic year, Louie's Cupboard served over 200 unique students.
- Beginning Fall 2019 semester, Louie's Cupboard began to bring benefits specialists to distributions to help enroll students in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.
- Health promotion began to offer Healthy Cooking Demos monthly to help students utilize their items from Louie's Cupboard.

Louie's Leftovers

- Through the NAU Go app, students can opt-in to receive push messages about leftover food from catering events. This resource helps reduce food waste and connect students to additional sources of food.
- As of November 2019, 1,670 people have opted in to receive Louie's Leftovers notifications; 60 events utilized Louie's Leftovers.

IMQ Food Bank Visits:

- IMQ began taking students to the Flagstaff Family Food Center to pick up food boxes during the spring 2018 semester.

Campus Collaborations:

- A Food Insecurity Task Force was formed during the spring 2018 semester.
- Members of the task force include representatives from ASNAU, First Generation Programs & Services, Faculty, Campus Health Services, Graduate Student Government, ITS, Faculty Senate and Campus Dining.
- Priorities identified by the task force during the 2018-2019 academic year included: (1) conducting a needs assessment, (2) including a food insecurity statement on syllabi, and (3) developing a program to reduce food waste at catered events by donating leftover food to food insecure students (Louie's Leftovers).

Dining Scholarship Program:

- This scholarship is awarded to one or more students enrolled at Northern Arizona University who meet the following criteria: A full time first year freshman, that has financial need, with high school GPA of 2.5 and above.

Future opportunities:

Several opportunities have been identified by members of the Food Insecurity Task Force to continue to support food insecure students, including:

- Disseminating information about food insecurity on campus to continue advocating for student support services.
- Sharing information about food insecurity resources with campus gatekeepers (advisors, peer mentors, staff, faculty, etc.) as well as helpful messages to reduce stigma surrounding help seeking behaviors.
- Continuing to offer capacity building programs to help students increase financial literacy skills and shopping/cooking skills.

How You Can Help:

1. Use Louie's Leftovers at catered events:
 - When placing a catering order, choose to use Louie's Leftovers when filling out your contact information.
 - After your catered event, call 928-523-9294. Be sure that you have at least 6 servings of food leftover, and that your event space is reserved for 30 minutes after (and that you are able to stay!)
2. Refer students in need to resources:
 - Encourage students to opt-in to the Louie's Leftovers channel in the NAU go app to receive push notifications.
 - Direct students to Louie's Cupboard (<https://in.nau.edu/dean-of-students/louies-cupboard/>). Ensure that they bring their NAU ID.
 - Share additional food resources with students: <https://in.nau.edu/dean-of-students/additional-resources/>
3. Make a food donation:
 - Louie's Cupboard is always taking donations for non-perishable items. Drop off items at Room 104 University Union or organize a drive in your department!
4. Make a monetary donation:
 - Offer monetary support for Louie's Cupboard by visiting <https://alumni.nau.edu/giving.aspx?FNDS=05351>
5. Participate in the Food Recovery Network:
 - Donate your time by helping to drive excess food from Campus Dining to local shelters and food centers.