

Campus Resource Centers

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Why a Campus Resource Center Model?

Beginning in 2017, Dr. Saul Petersen began researching models for empowering students that would include dealing with food insecurity but not limit itself to that one barrier to success. Two successful operating models were tracked down and visited, one called Lula Bell's Resource Center at [Davidson College](#) and the other called [Community Food Centres Canada](#). In both cases, it became clear that the stigma associated with hunger is real and needs to be strategically planned against its reinforcement in operational design (for reference please see sample research on stigma and food security in the appendix to this document). With these sources and principles, Dr. Petersen spent much of 2018 developing a model that would be suitable to a college campus, particularly a public institution with its significant numbers of commuters. This model was then brought to life through **funding from Robert Wood Johnson in 2018 as a seed grant** and was piloted at New Jersey City University.

The one-year pilot served to expand the mission of a traditional food pantry and implement a Community Center model of food and resource *touchpoints*. By '*touchpoints*' we mean the situations where clients, in this case university students on behalf of their families, decide to access nutrition and knowledge in a stigma-free and welcoming environment. The term '*campus resource (or) community center*' is used to specifically focus on a diversity, equity and inclusion lens whereby placing community at the center is not only about access to nutrition and knowledge but also about creating an environment where ALL people feel welcome, equal and empowered to determine their own path to success. Student need, and its potential association with stigma, is reversed in the tagline at our pilot site at New Jersey City University, **"In this community, we are ALL needed"** as outlined on the website –

<https://www.njcu.edu/student-life/campus-services-resources/community-center> -

The Campus Resource Center **mission is** to link students with resources that empower and enhance self-determined success. The center strives to provide equal access to such resources that are often taken for granted by those who benefit without asking. These areas of comprehensive resource availability include food and housing insecurity, supports for children and parents, nutrition and hygiene, professional clothing, mental health counseling, financial literacy, supporting diversity, and rights of the undocumented, and more. Students who are food insecure tend to face an array of obstacles limiting their self-determined ability to succeed and, therefore, by addressing all issues under one welcoming roof at the center, we increase the likelihood of success overall.

The approach encompasses five main areas within the Campus Resource Center:

- To ensure equal access and comprehensive awareness of resources and offices in support of students, especially the food pantry, as well as those resources made available
- To eliminate the barrier to self-determined success that food insecurity creates
- To connect all students who wish to tackle issues of stress and trauma with those trained in mental health counseling
- To ensure opportunities provided to students based on merit can be availed of through the free provisions of professional clothing, thereby eliminating the barrier of financial stress of having to buy professional clothing for internships and interviews
- To operate a welcoming, comfortable, stigma-free, event-packed Community Center for all students based on the resources that empower students' success

Appendix

The following is a snapshot of research on negative stigma experienced by clients in a pantry situation:

Daugherty, Jamie, "Experiences of Students Utilizing a Campus Food Pantry" (2017). Dissertations. 437. <https://digscholarship.unco.edu/dissertations/437>
<https://digscholarship.unco.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1436&context=dissertations>

p. 34 – *"Stigmatization can prevent students from receiving the assistance they need"*
Katherine Alaimo, Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition, Michigan State University
https://sites.nationalacademies.org/cs/groups/dbassesite/documents/webpage/dbasse_084303.pdf

p. 6 – *"This sentiment, while charitable, seems to also reflect the high degree of stigma respondents feel when they approach a food pantry for assistance."*

p. 7 – *"There is concern that 'voluntary food assistance works to 'reaffirm class-based stereotypes' in which the poor, many of whom are minority women and their children, are viewed as needing assistance because of personal defects or temporary misfortunes that warrant only an emergency response from society."*

See also: Edin K, Boyd M, Mabli J, et al. SNAP Food Security In-Depth Interview Study: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Research and Analysis; 2013.

Loftin, J. (2013). Getting help when needed: Food insecurity among college students and the impact of food pantry availability. Retrieved from University of Central Florida STARS website: http://www.stars.library.ucf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2425&context=honors_theses1990-2015

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