

Food Sovereignty & Insecurity at WWU: 2024 Project Findings

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Introduction

The significance of food monopolies in public universities' dining systems has resulted in many students being food insecure and having a lack of food sovereignty. Access to food on college campuses is an important and challenging aspect of student life. Public institutions' infrastructure has not caught up with students' basic needs. At Western Washington University (WWU) students face high rates of food insecurity, high rent costs, lack of access to affordable grocery stores, and lack of affordable food on campus. There has been an ongoing debate at WWU over the significance of food monopolies, especially as they pertain to on-campus dining and food provision services, not to mention the labor and sustainability practices of these large corporations. There are many issues when recognizing food sovereignty on campus. Our group focused on awareness of on-campus resources, specifically the food pantries, and the stigma surrounding food access and utilization of food pantries.

There is not one conclusive definition of "hunger". Regardless, the two themes of "undernourishment" and "food security" prevail when lack of food is discussed (Patel, 2012). Although they are often posited as being in conflict (Clapp, 2014), food security and food sovereignty, are important to consider. Food security is the ability for an individual to access affordable food and know when and where their next meal is coming from. Food sovereignty is defined as the "right of peoples to healthy culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods and their right to define their own food and agricultural system" (Sélingué, 2007). While food sovereignty focuses on local control and decision-making over food systems, this approach often leads to "broader social, economic and environmental benefits"(Leventon & Laudan, 2017, p.23). The idea of food sovereignty relies on the prioritization of food systems and governance as opposed to what markets and corporations are commanding (Nyéléni Declaration, 2007). Food sovereignty, much like food security, prioritizes access to nutritionally available, and culturally relevant foods, with an emphasis on the individual's agency in the navigation and use of one's food system.

Some of the efforts to address food insecurity on WWU's campus embrace a food sovereignty. For example, the Outback Farm, is a place where students can learn methods of ethical food production. All the produce grown at the Outback Farm is given directly back to the students. The on-campus food pantries are flooded with varieties of produce in the summer and fall. The Outback Farm allows students to support an ever-growing system of ecologically sound farming. Classes are taught on the farm. The food forest and community plots at the Outback are ways that individuals who do not attend any of the farm's work parties or events to learn what the Outback is about, how the farm relies on community knowledge and partnership, as well as working toward a student body that feels more connected to their food.

At the beginning of this project, we all felt overwhelmed by the various strategies worth pursuing regarding food insecurity on campus. One of our considerations was to apply for a small grant through the Sustainability, Equity, & Justice Fund (SEJF) and hand out free food. We brainstormed writing an academic paper regarding the state of food insecurity on campus, although many of these exist. We even thought of creating a campus map of available resources before we settled on our methodology. With the incredible resource of our group member, Red Grojean who works for the WHOLE (Western Hub of Living Essentials) food pantry in the VU, our team concluded that our best point of access would be through the food pantries. Our group toured each food pantry on campus and took notes of our overall impressions and photos of each pantry. The notes include where the pantries are in each building, whether there might be accessibility issues for individuals if there was a schedule posted on their restocking dates/times, what kinds of food were provided and how much of it was stocked, as well as whether students were occupying the pantries while we were there. Initially, our goal was to determine the *need*

for the essential resources that are Western's mostly unfunded, faculty-run food pantries. However, our project evolved to a peer-centered perspective. The lack of food security and sovereignty is a pervasive issue among students, compounded by demographic differences, and communication of resources, and encouragement of use were what we determined to be the most important and achievable goals of our project.

Accessibility and affordability of equitably sourced food should be guaranteed to students paying thousands of dollars a year to attend public universities. Using resources such as the Office of Basic Needs, the resources provided by the sociology department assisted group FIN (Food Insecurity Network), and the peer-reviewed paper *From Food Access to Food Sovereignty* (Darby et al, 2023), our group was able to centralize the need for student awareness and de-stigmatization of campus-wide resources.

Project Goals

Our project culminated in a teach-in for current WWU students. We identified the need to educate students about the food security resources available to them and provide actions they can take to keep these pantries running. Providing information about the pantries and other food resources available through Western was the central goal of our project. In addition, we aimed to provide suggestions for how to support these resources and ensure they remain available to students. We wanted to collaborate with faculty and fellow students who are working to reduce food insecurity on campus and create connections with one another to strengthen these efforts. We also wanted to inform students about the current Western dining system, Chartwells, and how switching to this provider has affected students. We organized a teach-in intending to connect with our peers who want to learn about resources for food security or get involved in campus activism. This was an essential component of building individual capacity to promote sustainable food systems. The issue of food insecurity on Western's campus is multifaceted, but the overarching need was to advocate for hungry students and create better support systems for food resources on campus. The more campus-available resources are talked about and used, the more attention they will get. Through the process of a student-led teach-in, we worked to advocate for hungry students and urge the use of these on-campus free food services. We aimed to combine all these factors: education, collaboration, and advocacy. Collaborating with resources on campus to advocate for student-led change, bring awareness to campus resources toward access to food as a basic need, and de-stigmatize utilization of these resources.

Project Approach and Methodology

Prior to the creation of our project, everyone had some background regarding social justice, food sovereignty, and knowledge of food system functioning. One of our members, Red Grojean, provided context to the functions of the WHOLE pantry, as one of its dedicated staff members. This foundational knowledge would be reinforced in the WWU-specific research we would conduct in our project. To develop our understanding of the state of food security specific to WWU, we read *From Food Access to Food Sovereignty: Striving to Meet University Student Needs* (Darby et al., 2023). This paper informed our group about the political economy of food insecurity on campus, and the manifestation of its constraints on the WWU food web. The neoliberalization of colleges creates a disconnect between the college and its' students by treating students like customers (Darby et al., 2023). This transactional relationship, in addition to the increasing cost of living, poses a financial threat to students: it is increasingly hard to afford food. Existing efforts of food sovereignty on campus, had limited agency in providing resources to students, and the stigmatization around food insecurity limited student willingness to utilize such sources. The study also found that students of color, gender queer, and transgender students

were disproportionately affected by food insecurity, based on the findings of a 2018 census collection of students and their experience with food insecurity on campus. This source allowed us to establish areas of greatest need, whether that be resources, funding, or staffing. After great discussion, we decided that, as supported by previous work (Darby et al., 2023), the weight of food access and security largely has fallen on the individual, and the institution needs to adapt to support the needs of its students.

Interviews with Food Security Leaders

The research we conducted consisted of interviews with the faculty members running the food pantries, and additional faculty members involved in food security or student resources. We conducted nine interviews throughout February of 2024: a representative from each of the pantries (excluding the sociology pantry), Terri Kempton (Outback Farm), Gina Ebbeling (Basic Needs Resource Manager), and the Food Insecurity Network. The purpose of these interviews was to gain a better understanding of what Western is missing in terms of food security efforts, who is stepping up to combat food insecurity, and what we can do to provide help and spread awareness. We found that most of these pantries are being supplemented by faculty paying out of pocket. Pantries were originally guerilla start-ups for students during the beginning of the pandemic. The need for this resource was made apparent so faculty stepped up to ensure that on-campus pantries continue to exist. These interviews also allowed us to build connections with other resources on campus, such as Gina Ebbeling from the Basic Needs Office and Terri Kempton from the Outback. Terri was a great resource for learning more about the Outback's struggle toward sustainable funding and the impact that could have on food security on campus.

In addition to our interviews, we attempted to contact Chartwells (the current campus dining contractor), to gather information and inform them of the need to support food pantries on campus. We never heard back from Chartwells staff; however, we did gain access to their contract with Western.¹ Group member Mason interpreted the contract for us and contextualized its implications based on meetings with Grey Webster, Melissa Osborne, and the Food Insecurity Network. Essentially, Chartwells has the first right of refusal in any decisions appropriating funds towards catered food for students. Any use of department funds, that are not approved by Chartwells, can be considered a breach of contract, and faculty can be held liable for that. Faculty or staff interested in catering services must go through three layers of bureaucracy to secure a pizza party. First, they need to secure funds in the form of a dedicated fund for food and beverages. Second, they must acquire department permission for the allotted use of funds. Faculty/applicants also need to provide a permissible reason for the exemption of the use of Chartwells catering services. Chartwells has the right to refuse these exemption requests. The workarounds departments have been using in navigating catering refusal, is expressing the cultural relevance of food being catered by authentic services, or anything quick.

We found that Chartwells, on its Dining on Campus website, under [Our Sustainability](#), declares that they support campus food pantries, and seeks to bridge the gap of food insecurity on campus. However, as far as we know, there have been no actions initiated by the organization to actively provide these food security efforts with resources or support. In addressing the disruption of Chartwells services to student food sovereignty, we wanted to maintain a theme that did not compromise the pantries' effectiveness. We wanted to prevent the disruption of any actions that could benefit the common good of students in the form of potential Chartwells collaboration with pantries. And we wanted to preserve the job security of any Chartwells workers we had contacted in informing our knowledge of the markets and their food waste.

¹ Chartwells did eventually respond to our requests to donate food for the event.

Food Pantries

Interviewing the faculty and staff members who run the food pantries allowed us to get further insight into the food insecurity issue on campus. We asked questions regarding the limitations of these pantries, if/how Western contributes to these pantries, where the food comes from (paid out of pocket from faculty and staff, local grocery stores, etc.), and how often the pantries are utilized. After interviewing the food pantry faculty and staff, we found there are common themes among all the pantries. First is the lack of support from Western. Many staff members are working overtime to ensure that these pantries are stocked, and some are paying out of pocket to supplement them. The pantries lack stability because of these limitations. The quality of food is another issue. Lower-quality food is less expensive, so that is typically the only option. There is a lack of culturally significant foods, another outcome of limited funds. Another common theme is accessibility, the pantries are hard to find. Accessibility issues range from difficulties with stairs, to offices that can be closed on a whim, making access difficult for those who have inconsistent schedules.

All food pantries have difficulties with funding and getting resources, but luckily there are other resources available in Bellingham. Sustainable Connections is a food recovery program that assists in getting food recovered and redistributed, and WWU food pantries have worked with them in the past to gather resources and provide internships. The food pantries have previously worked with another food recovery program, Miracle Food Network, but have not since early 2024 due to heavy financial hits that have caused them to draw out of the Bellingham area. Luckily, just before they pulled out, Jenn Cook (Head of WHOLE food pantry) managed to secure an agreement with Trader Joes to gather food donations from them twice a week on Mondays and Fridays (as of 3/14/2024). There has been an attempt to reach out to WWU's current provider, Chartwells, as student employees report that they have been throwing out massive amounts of food. This was met with little receptiveness from Chartwells.

Regular, robust resources and consistency are needed. A centralized position for food pantries would also prove helpful. Faculty would not have to sacrifice their own time and money to keep these pantries running. However, this idea has been shot down in the past due to lack of logistics, differences in need, and roadblocks in place by the food providers. Giving the food pantries more reliable funding and food access is the main issue with food pantries on campus, as currently there is only one pantry that is funded by the school, but none of the funding goes towards food access itself.

Western Hub of Living Essentials (WHOLE, or VU Food Pantry):



Figure 1: Photograph of the Refrigerator at WHOLE Pantry, Viking Union at WWU. (Pappas, Jan. 2024).

WHOLE, located in Viking Union 435, is run by Jenn Cook. WHOLE is a part of Western's Associated Students (AS), resulting in paid work-study jobs and a stipend of \$8,119 a year for said jobs and

operational supplies. The current food pantry coordinators at WHOLE are Leo Curtis and Red Grojean. WHOLE is the only food pantry to get any sort of funding from Western Washington University and has the most bandwidth for accessing other resources, the responsibility of which has been allocated to Jenn Cook, who is the only staff paid to work for any of the food pantries at WWU.

Fairhaven Food Pantry:



Figure 2: Photograph of the Fairhaven Pantry, in the Fairhaven Commons, WWU. (Pappas, Jan. 2024).

The food pantry in the Fairhaven building is run by April Keala, on the third floor across from the main office. Fairhaven food pantry receives some produce from the Outback Farm. During the spring and summer seasons, this produce is dispersed across various pantries as the crop yields are high. This pantry was started by Terri Kempton and a group of staff just before the COVID-19 pandemic in a small office drawer, which expanded to gleaned meal pick-ups during lockdown, which was shut down due to health concerns. This did not stop persistent Terri, who encouraged the pantry to grow into what it is today.

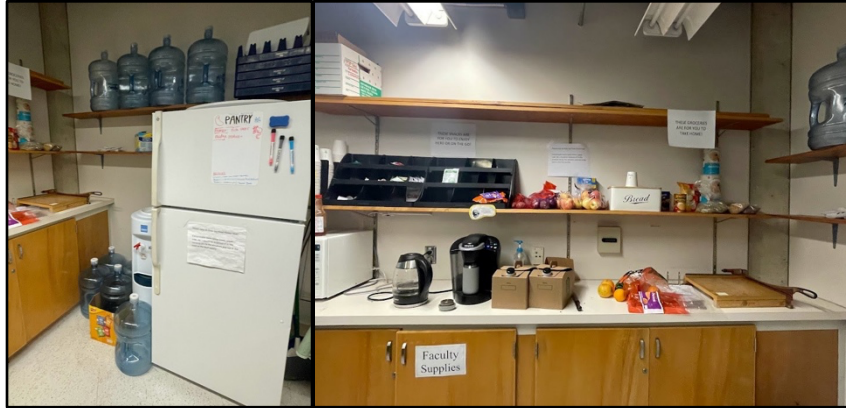
Center for Equity, Education, and Diversity (CEED) Food Pantry:



Figure 3: Photograph of the CEED Pantry, in Miller Hall, WWU. (Pappas, Jan. 2024).

The CEED Pantry is run by Grey Webster and A Longoria, in Miller Hall 150H. CEED focuses on using its limited funds to provide culturally relevant food to students.

Sociology Food Pantry:



Figures 4 & 5: Photographs of the Sociology Pantry in Arntzen Hall, WWU. (Pappas, Jan. 2024).

The Sociology Pantry is run by Melissa Osborne, in Arntzen Hall 510 and 506. Unfortunately, we were unable to contact Melissa Osborne for an interview as it was a very demanding quarter for us all. It is important to note that this pantry also acts as the hub for the Food Insecurity Network, which is a connecting point for many things pertaining to actions that combat food insecurity.

Communications/ Journalism Food Pantry:



Figure 6 & 7: Photographs of the Communications Pantry in the Comm. Facility, WWU. (Pappas 2024).

The Comm. Pantry is run by Betsy O'Donovan and Colleen van Pelt, in the Communications Facility, across from 257. A small pantry that often has snacks and pregnancy tests.

Linguistics Food Pantry:



Figures 8 & 9: Photographs of the Linguistics Pantry in Bond Hall, WWU. (Pappas, Jan. 2024).

The Linguistics Pantry is run by Jordan Sandoval and Sara Helms, in Bond Hall 403. This food pantry began in 2017/2018 and took a hiatus when the pandemic hit, but later reopened in 2021, steadily remaining open to today. This food pantry originally started right outside of the Linguistics offices but moved to a more discreet location for students who were uncomfortable with its visibility. The pantry being changed to a different space helped decrease distress for students. It is used very often; they limit how much food they put out to ensure the pantry does not run through funds too quickly. Another reason for moving to a new space was to compensate for the need for more food. This pantry gets a large amount of funding from donations, both monetary and goods from staff and students.

College of Business and Economics Food Pantry:

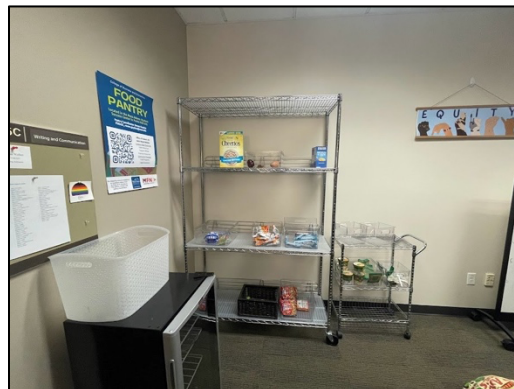


Figure 10: Photograph of the Economics Pantry in Parks Hall, WWU. (Pappas, Jan. 2024).

The College of Business and Economics Pantry is run by Renee Gayden, in Parks Hall 045. Renee was interviewed by Mason, Jessica, and Liv. The CBE food pantry was started in 2022 due to a vacancy and a need for a food pantry in the hall. Renee jumped on the opportunity to create more community and access, which started as a pop-up pantry and grew in popularity.

Other Resources for Food-Insecure Students

Luckily for students and food pantry coordinators alike, Western has a funded position dedicated to helping students gain access to food, housing, and additional funds. The Basic Needs Office, run by Gina Ebbeling as its Coordinator, is a wonderful space that gets students connected to short- or long-term resources on and off campus. They currently have programs with the Community Food Co-Op in

downtown Bellingham. We also contacted Jon Stubblefield, who previously worked in the Basic Needs Office in a grant-funded position. When funding ran out, he worked at the financial aid office for a year and is now back in the Basic Needs Office thanks to his funding of a new position. There are other, unfunded groups such as the Food Insecurity Network, a student-run club that helps students get better access to food by advocating for those experiencing food insecurity and creating a space for student activism. Another excellent resource is Terri Kempton, who runs the Outback Farm and helped start the Fairhaven Food Pantry. She is still active in bringing food from the Outback to the pantries.

Food Pantries at WWU: Operations, Resources, and Accessibility						
Completed by Red Grojean, Mar. 2024.						
	Fairhaven	WHOLE	Linguistics	Comms	CBE	CEED
Where does this pantry get its food?	Staff money and goods donations, Trader Joes	Staff money and goods donations, Trader Joes,	Staff money and goods donations,	Staff money and goods donations, Trader Joes	Staff money and goods donations, Trader Joes	Staff money and goods donations,
On-Campus Location:	Fairhaven Building, third floor outside of main office	Viking Union 435	Bond Hall 403	Communications Facility, across from 257	Parks Hall 045	Miller Hall 150H, Grey Webster's office
Does this pantry have volunteers?	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
What kinds of non-food items does this pantry provide?	Recipes, Menstrual products	Menstrual products, hygiene products, Contraceptive products.	N/A	Pregnancy products, Menstrual products	Menstrual products,	Unsure
Is this pantry regularly restocked?	Yes	Yes	Day to day	Yes	Yes	Unsure

Table 1: WWU Food Pantry Accessibility and Associated Resources. (Grojean 2024).

Preparing for the Teach-In

We structured the teach-in intending to engage with students and create a space for discussion. To achieve this, we included group and individual exercises in our presentation. This inspired conversation among the group and provided helpful feedback for us. To advertise the event, group member Liv made posters and we placed them around campus. We also reached out to fellow students, specifically first and second-year students, and we made a few announcements in other Environmental Studies classes. We offered free food as an incentive, which was provided for free by Chartwells. Group members also made food for the event.

Teach-In Summary and Findings

We held our teach-in on February 28th, 2024 in the Viking Union. We advertised the teach-in by putting up posters around campus (Figures 11-13), talking to other Environmental Studies classes, and telling our friends, roommates, and professors about the event. A goal of ours for the teach-in was to have food available for everyone who came. We provided snacks that we made: chocolate chip cookies, carrots, and hummus. We also contacted Chartwells to ask for a snack donation for our event. Despite our criticism of Chartwells, they did donate a box of Goldfish, cookies, granola bars, and various sodas and water. The

process of contacting someone from Chartwells who could help us and was willing to talk to us was a challenge and we felt discouraged at many points. However, once we did find someone who could help, they were very kind and willing to work with us.



Figures 11 & 12: Food Sovereignty at WWU Teach-In Promotional Posters. (Berner 2024).

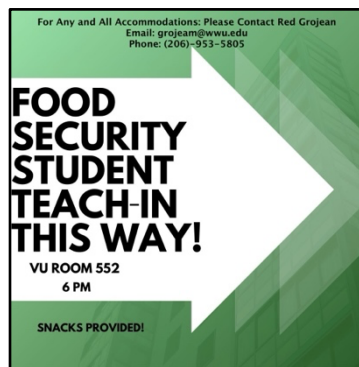


Figure 13: Orientation Poster for the WWU Food Sovereignty Teach-In. (Berner 2024).

The major themes we explored through our teach-in included food insecurity and food sovereignty, with an emphasis on student participation and collaboration, decentralization of institutional power, and encouragement of student action. We wanted to provide a foundational knowledge of food insecurity issues to the participants. We outlined the major actors in the food system on campus, the issues associated with these players, and how different programs are supporting food-insecure students. We also provided a list of actions to take to advocate for better food systems on campus. We chose to discuss food insecurity in conjunction with the importance of food sovereignty. We wanted to provide a realistic overview of the food insecurity issues on campus, but also provide some hope through food sovereignty actions. We began our presentation by establishing our goals for the meeting and providing background

information about Western's food system. We then gave an overview of the food pantries on campus, where they are, who runs them, how to contact them, and what they look like. The Darby et al. food study was summarized to provide further background on the food insecurity issue for college students. We then examined the Chartwells contract, providing a basic outline of the document and what it means for WWU food security. The Outback Farm is included as well, because of its important contributions to food security on campus. We listed the classes that take place at the Outback, the contributions it makes to students and staff, and ways to interact with the farm. Lastly, we included additional resources for students experiencing food insecurity and future actions students can take to improve food security on campus. Individual exercises and group icebreakers were included throughout the presentation to help students get acquainted and allow them to share their personal experiences with food insecurity.

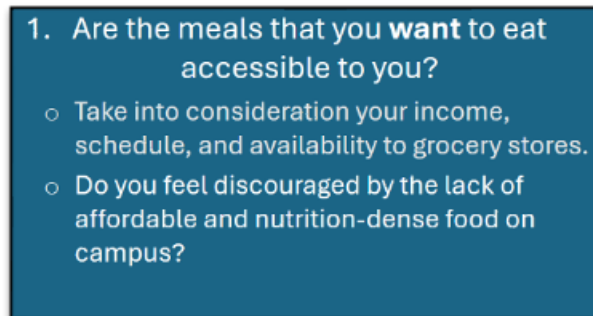


Figure 14: Excerpt of a Slide from the Food Sovereignty Teach-In (Feb. 28, 2024).

Overall, the teach-in was a success. We worried that the turnout would be low, but to our surprise, we filled about 35 seats. We were able to provide a lot of information and resources to students and faculty, facilitate discussions about the downfalls of our current food systems on campus, and about personal experiences of food insecurity. We hoped to provide information but also to make it interactive and provide space and time to build community. Overall, we are very happy with how it turned out and inspired by the public participation and resulting community building we were able to facilitate.

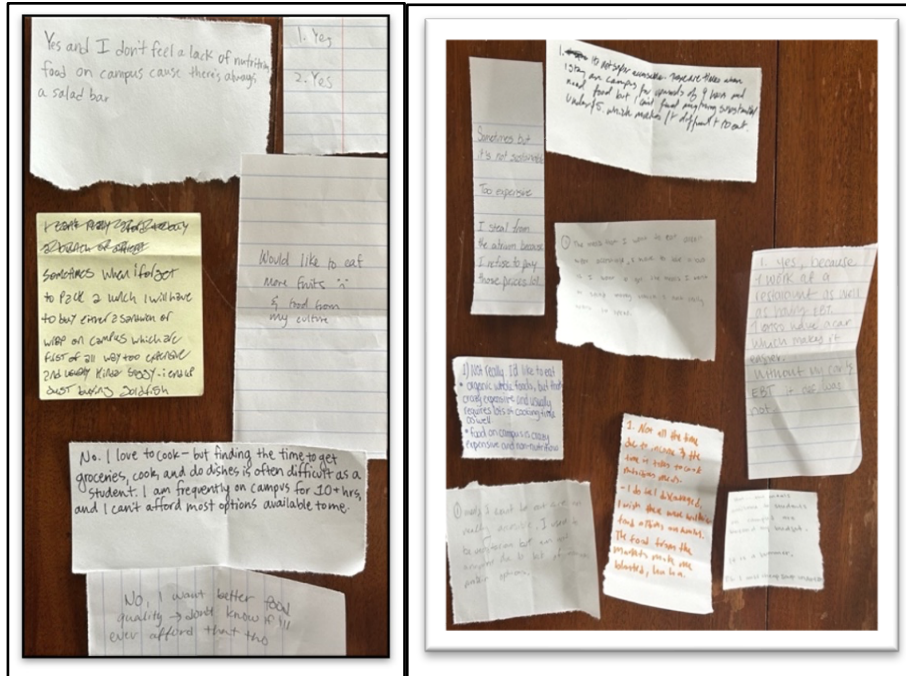


Figures 15 & 16: Figure 5 (Left): Photograph of Food Sovereignty Teach-In Set-Up. Figure 6 (Right): Group Photo after the conclusion of the Food Sovereignty Teach-In (not all group members pictured). (Feb. 28, 2024).

Project Reflection

Food security is a heavy subject on the mind of many college students. Being able to have access to healthy, nutritious, and affordable food is necessary for students with busy schedules who need energy for focused learning (Darby et al., 2023). Being a college student is not what it used to be. The cost of living is increasing, rent is rising, grocery bills are becoming less affordable, the cost of tuition is going up while the minimum wage, and federal grants stay stagnant (Mapari, 2023). Full-time students are struggling to work full-time jobs to keep up with rising prices. Many of the food security resources on campus are being threatened with funding cuts which makes it hard to keep up with demand. Food sovereignty is important to students because it fulfills their nutritional, cultural, and financial needs in navigating higher education. College is a challenging time and having adequate food available should not be as big of a challenge as it is, especially at a public, state-funded institution such as Western. Moreover, the functions of the Western-Chartwells contract undermines food sovereignty efforts provided by dedicated faculty and staff. Western faculty and staff, dedicated to addressing food insecurity should not have to jump through bureaucratic hoops set up by a for-profit company to support their students.

As students (especially student employees, of which some of us are), we have limited authority and capacity to implement change, especially as it relates to maintaining income or institutional access. As we learned throughout this process, criticism is necessary for institutional growth and equitability. Still, the agency of those who depend on the whims of a bureaucratic system for shelter, employment, and of course food is severely limited in doing so. In conducting our teach-in, we asked students if the meals that they wanted to eat were accessible to them, considering their income, schedule and locality to grocery stores, and if they felt discouraged by the lack of affordable, and nutritional food on campus. The consensus we found from figures 17-19, were feelings of dissatisfaction rooted in the lack of affordable and nutritious options on campus, the limited time available for working students to dedicate to their own food security, and extenuating circumstances which limited students' capability to cope (medical debt, neurodivergence, etc.).



Figures 17 & 18: Examples of Student Responses from Anonymous Activity during the Food Sovereignty Teach-In. (Feb. 28, 2024).

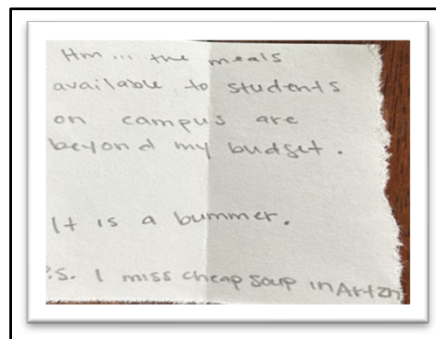


Figure 19: Example of Anonymous Student Response from the Food Sovereignty Teach-In, Referencing Emotional Consequence of Food Insecurity. (Feb. 28, 2024).

Meaningful change on an individual level would mean that students are informed on the resources available to them, students can advocate for the importance of these resources, students use these resources to demonstrate their importance, and students can get involved in campus activism for food justice. While hunger is undoubtedly an issue of bureaucracy, inequitable distribution, and institutional structure, the pressure to respond to this issue unfairly lies with the people going hungry. Ensuring that people have food is meaningful to the individuals affected, even if it does not change the system's function. As seen described by students in our teach-in, the issues of salience are ones of basic survival needs (Figures 17, 18, & 19). Without basic food security, a food-sovereign system cannot be implemented. Institutions that have the responsibility of feeding, housing, and teaching students, such as Western, can contribute more funds to food pantries and food security efforts, an official position could be established for a pantry overseer, and Chartwells could help with food insecurity on campus by following through with their promises to do so. On an institutional level, there has been an increase in funding for the Basic Needs Office, allowing for the creation of a new position, something that will have

a direct impact on students' potential access to available guidance and resources. These structural changes may not directly put food into peoples' hands, but it does reform the existing system to prevent conditions of food insecurity for future students, and potentially to even create an environment where students hold food sovereignty over the institution they fund.

Recommended Future Actions

Food insecurity at WWU on and off campus is an overwhelming issue. At the beginning of our project, the overwhelming nature of this problem was difficult to cope with, and our frame of research shifted to individual action. Student surveys, interviews, and local knowledge are essential to establishing an equitable and thorough framing of WWU's food sovereignty systems. When we, as students, are allowed to examine an issue with the same degree of respect and assumed expertise as scientists, our portrait of the problem at hand is infinitely more personal and relevant than a clinical, bird-eye-view study (see Corburn 2002 for an environmental health case study that illustrates the importance of community-based research).

One option we gave students was to contact WWU President Sabah Randhawa to thank him for reinstating Outback funding and encouraging future farm-specific endeavors. We chose this option because it allows students an avenue in which to subtly pressure the WWU faculty with decision-making agency and to demonstrate the significance of the Outback as a food system. Public pressure is an important aspect of both community science and community-based research, placing the opinions, needs, and desires of members of the public at the same level as experts in the field (Corburn 2002). Another option we gave attendees of our teach-in was to increase the frequency of their resource use, which did seem counterintuitive at first but was recommended to us by the faculty directors of several WWU pantries. WWU makes decisions based on assessment of student needs for the lowest feasible cost, as do many higher education programs. Because of this, the choice of which programs to remove is based on use and cost-effectiveness. If no students show up to claim a resource, then that resource is considered wasted, and will likely not be re-upped. By increasing individual use, students not only provide themselves with a degree of food security, but program directors and budget analysts see the increased use as a more worthy expenditure. A problem that was consistently identified by many faculty, staff, students, and community members, was the fickle nature of funding for both the food pantries and the Outback Farm, both of which are essential programs that give students the ability to develop their level of personal food sovereignty, and to decrease their reliance on increasingly costly systems. The same idea of program use as a demonstration of institutional demand applies to the community gardens but is harder to quantify. Future studies could focus solely on the Outback's functioning and longevity, either pressuring the faculty with decision-making agency through direct action or by reinforcing programs like the food forest, individual plots for rent, educational spaces, and communal gardens.

Research in and outside of ENVS 467 on food systems at WWU is needed, and fostering connections between accessible food resources on campus is crucial to their continued positive impact. There are many potential issues and identified inequities that we could not address within our given timeframe and could be utilized by future classes to narrow their framing. These include accessibility issues in travel between campus buildings to use low-income food services, namely a lack of elevator access to certain food pantries (Fairhaven), and the general inaccessibility of WWU's walking routes. A project centered around this could entail the creation of ADA routes to different pantries around the campus, as these are not currently (as of March 2024) included in the [WWU's ADA Campus Route Map](#).

Food sovereignty is an increasingly difficult objective to reach for many communities, and WWU is no exception to this, given the institution's reliance on contracted vendors. This issue compounds the pre-

existing state of food insecurity many students find themselves in during college, with rising educational and living costs, rent increases, and the many demographic disparities that may make some students more vulnerable than others. Research, collaboration, and pressure are all student-led processes that collaborate with faculty in achieving the goal of equitable food sovereignty and equitable safeguards against food insecurity, or pressure those in positions of power to act in the interests of the masses.

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Appendix A: Resource Hand-Out

Resources for Combatting Food Insecurity at WWU:

Food insecurity is an overwhelming issue. It's impossible to solve everything immediately, so here are actions YOU can take to assure food sovereignty for yourself, your peers, and future WWU students:

- Email President Sabah to thank him for reinstating Outback funding and encouraging future farm-specific endeavors.
- Use the WWU pantries whenever you need them and encourage your peers to use their resources.
- Outback work parties are on Wednesdays and Sundays!! Check their website for further details and other events.
- In general, participate in the free/low-cost food systems in place around WWU as much as possible to demonstrate how necessary they are.
- Chartwells Focus Groups will be conducted for residential and commuter students on 3/6 and 3/7, see resource QR codes!

Resource Centers/Programs at WWU:	QR Code:
Basic Needs Office	
Outback Work Parties & Garden Resources	
FIN (Food Insecurity Network)	
Chartwells' Focus Groups	
Schedule a Meeting with Gina from Basic Needs (WWU)	https://calendly.com/ebbelig/30min?month=2024-02

Resource Centers/Programs Outside of WWU:	QR Code:
Bellingham Food Bank	
Whatcom County Food Bank/Meal Dropoff Registry	
Whatcom Food Network	


Foothills Food Bank (Mt. Vernon)	

Table A: Resources for Combatting Food Insecurity at WWU. (Berner, 2024).