

Student Resource Staff Proposal

Submitted by the Social Justice Leadership Cohort of the Department of Women's and Gender Studies

Background Statement

The Social Justice Leadership Cohort (SJL) is an ongoing student project of the Women's and Gender Studies Department. In 2018 the SJL cohort began investigating food insecurity at the University of New Hampshire after learning 1 in 4 UNH students were food insecure. Over these last two years our key purpose has been to come up with short-term and long-term solutions for food insecure UNH students.

Internal Research

In 2019 we started to conduct key informant interviews, focus groups, and look at UNH's data regarding food insecurity in our community. When we reviewed Dr. Jesse Stabile Morrell's College of Health and Nutrition Assessment Survey (CHANAS) data. We found that approximately one in five UNH students are still food insecure. This number has remained roughly the same over the last two years at UNH. Students who self-identified as food insecure were invited to participate in focus groups led by SJL cohort members, and we found that students in need were less likely to find help if they had to share personal details or contact multiple people. Students were exhausted from being referred to numerous different resource programs and having to recount their story each time. The emotional labor and time spent search

Students often reported feeling shame and/or guilt when asking for assistance, yet this sentiment directly conflicts with the information SJL *gathered* in our key informant interviews. We spoke with UNH housing and residential life staff, and community members who reported plenty of resources were available for students in need. This means students were struggling unnecessarily due to a communication gap between students in need and UNH staff regarding what resources are available.

External Research

In 2020 we wanted to explore how to begin to solve our campus' food-insecurity crisis and we started looking at how other universities handled the same situation on their own campus. To do this we looked at the resources various universities had online on their student resource websites. We wanted to know what made a difference to food insecure students and what we could learn from other universities about helping our food-insecure students.

Proposed UNH Resource Updates:

To better address the needs of the 1 in 5 food insecure students on campus at UNH, we propose that UNH create a student resource office. The goal of the student resource office would be to have a UNH staff member available to direct students to the resources they need to manage their immediate emergency needs in order to succeed. We imagine the student resource staff would act as a UNH case worker and manage students' case by case needs surrounding housing, food, or financial struggles. This office would be responsible for managing student cases and assisting in filling the communication gap about resources across campus, and throughout the Durham community. Not only would this be an excellent resource for students, but for faculty and staff as well. Faculty could be educated that if they hear of a student crisis, they can send

them to the student resource office to help them, instead of sending students multiple places to seek out assistance and resources, which can increase the chance for miscommunications. Another important factor is making sure that students are aware of resources, and this is where UNH finds its greatest struggle (see attached second proposal).

References

- 1) Key Informant interviews with: Center for Academic Resources, UNH Housing and Residential Life, UNH Athletics, Health and Wellness, and Waysmeet
- 2) Davidson AR, Morrell JS. Food Insecurity Prevalence Among University Students in New Hampshire. *J Hunger Environ Nutr* 2018.