Introducing Nutrition Security: A University Approach

Prior research indicates that college students struggle with food insecurity with implications for nutrition and long-term health and economic outcomes. A well-developed and executed Nutrition Security Plan (NSAP) can help advance students’ food and nutrition security in target populations.

Objective

To outline the steps posited as a guide for developing and implementing a NSAP, present the key actionable recommendations included in the Plan, and highlight the implications for research and practice.

Constructs in the NSAP

The following nutrition security constructs were considered in the development of the Plan:

1. Access to adequate quantity, quality, and cultural preferences.
2. Contextual factors and structures favoring access to healthy dietary choices.
3. Policy and governance.

Implications for Research and Practice

The Plan was developed with modest funds from the sponsors. The use of existing functional collaborations streamlined the process of developing and implementing the plan. A simple plan, based on existing institutional structures, commits relevant stakeholders, and increases its capacity for implementation and monitoring.

Steps for developing a NSAP

Step 1: Creation of a Nutrition Security Advisory Board.
Step 2: Information Collection, Compilation, and Interpretation.
Step 3: Development of the Recommendations.

Conclusion

Implementing a Nutrition Security Plan on university campuses is a step towards achieving this goal. Nutrition Policy experts, practitioners, and researchers are encouraged to collaborate with university partners to develop Nutrition Security Plans for their campus community.

For Further Information

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Related literature


12 item Nutrition Security Action Plan (those in green have been implemented)

1. Create a centralized online resource platform for student needs such as food, housing, andfinance for student needs such as food, housing, and financial literacy.
2. Provide food storage (e.g., refrigerators) and cooking equipment (e.g., microwaves) in selected buildings across campus.
3. Disseminate and promote a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility screenerfor students through university communication platforms: Student Assistance and Support Services (SASS), International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO), and other student organizations and gatherings.
4. Apply for SNAP authorization for the convenience stores on campus.
5. Develop programs that increase food literacy through nutritional knowledge and cooking skills.
6. Provide more effective nutritional accommodations by including religious and culturally appropriate food options in university cafeterias, meal plans, and food pantry.
7. Use course materials and learning management systems to provide students with information of food and nutrition security interventions.
8. Improve bus routes to provide student access to healthy food stores and food pantries (including international grocery stores) outside the campus.
9. Provide larger amounts of funding to meet student food needs.
10. Increase the reach and usage of the Swipe Out Hunger program by increasing the cap on the number of swipes that can be accepted through donations.
11. Incorporate the #GiveHealthy system for food donations into the student food pantry.
12. Improve awareness around campus resources and interventions that address food and nutrition insecurity.