

**Addressing Food Insecurity and Promoting  
Sustainable, Affordable Food Practices at UBC**

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Abstract

# **Letter of Transmittal**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Food insecurity, or the inability to access nutritious and culturally appropriate food, is a growing issue among university students in North America. The University of British Columbia (UBC) is not exempt from this problem, with many students struggling to access affordable and healthy food options. This formal research report aims to investigate the prevalence of food insecurity among UBC students and propose strategies for promoting sustainable and affordable food practices on campus.

### A. Background and Context

Food insecurity has a significant impact on the physical and mental health of individuals, as well as their academic performance and overall well-being. In recent years, the issue of food insecurity has gained greater attention across North America, including in universities and colleges. Students, particularly those from low-income backgrounds, are at a higher risk of experiencing food insecurity due to rising costs of living and limited access to financial resources

### B. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this formal research report is to investigate the prevalence of food insecurity among UBC students and identify strategies for promoting sustainable and affordable food practices on campus. Specifically, this report aims to:

- Examine impacts of food insecurity among UBC students
- Evaluate the effectiveness and accessibility of current food programs and resources at UBC
- Develop recommendations for improving the availability and accessibility of sustainable, affordable food options on campus

### C. Description of Data Sources

The data for this research report will be collected through a variety of sources, including:

- An online survey of UBC students to gather data on their experiences with food insecurity and opinions on potential solutions for promoting sustainable and affordable food practices
- Interviews with UBC students who have experienced food insecurity or have used food programs and resources at UBC
- Review of secondary sources, including academic articles, reports, and news articles related to food insecurity, sustainable food practices, and food programs at universities

#### D. Scope of the Report

This formal research report will focus on the issue of food insecurity among UBC students and strategies for promoting sustainable and affordable food practices on campus. The report will include a review of current food programs and resources at UBC, an analysis of survey and interview data, and recommendations for improving food accessibility and reducing food insecurity.

Overall, this formal research report aims to provide insights into the prevalence and impacts of food insecurity among UBC students, as well as potential strategies for promoting sustainable and affordable food practices on campus. The results of this research report have the potential to inform and improve food programs and resources at UBC, contributing to a more inclusive and supportive campus community.

## II. DATA SECTION

### A. Overview of Food Insecurity and Sustainable, Affordable Food Practices at UBC

#### 1. Definition of Food Insecurity

Food insecurity refers to the lack of access to adequate and nutritious food due to limited resources. This condition can lead to negative health outcomes and is often caused by socio-economic factors such as poverty, unemployment, and limited access to transportation.

#### 2. Importance of Sustainable, Affordable Food Practices

At UBC, sustainable and affordable food practices are critical for promoting the physical and mental health, academic success, and overall well-being of students. Despite the efforts made by the university, food insecurity remains a significant issue on campus.

In the following sections, we will examine the prevalence and impacts of food insecurity among UBC students, evaluate the effectiveness and accessibility of current food programs and resources at UBC, and develop recommendations for promoting sustainable and affordable food practices on campus.

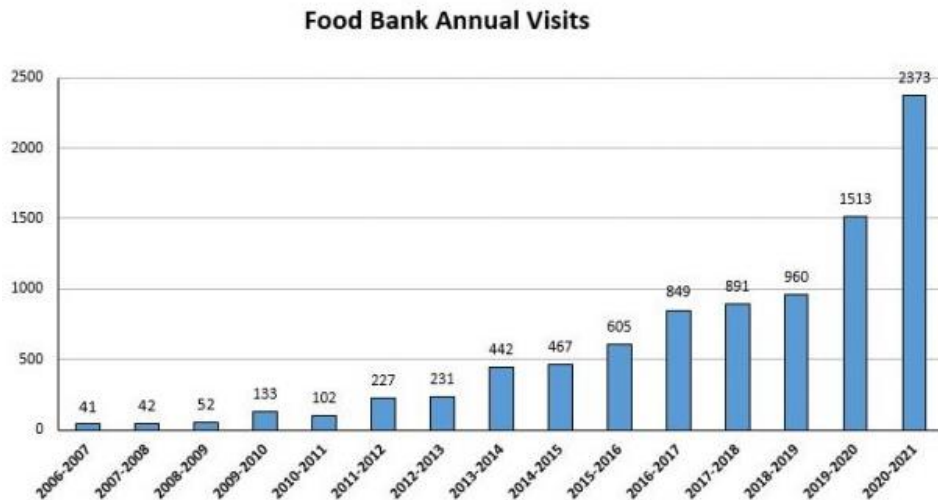


Figure 1 Food Bank Annual Visits

(Figure 1) By the end of last term, the food bank had seen a 67% increase in visits from last year and is now projected to reach over 2300 visits by the end of April this year. Demand has been rapidly increasing, and COVID has only further exasperated the issue by tipping the scales financially for many students

## B. Survey and Interview current UBC students

### 1. Survey and Interviews with UBC students

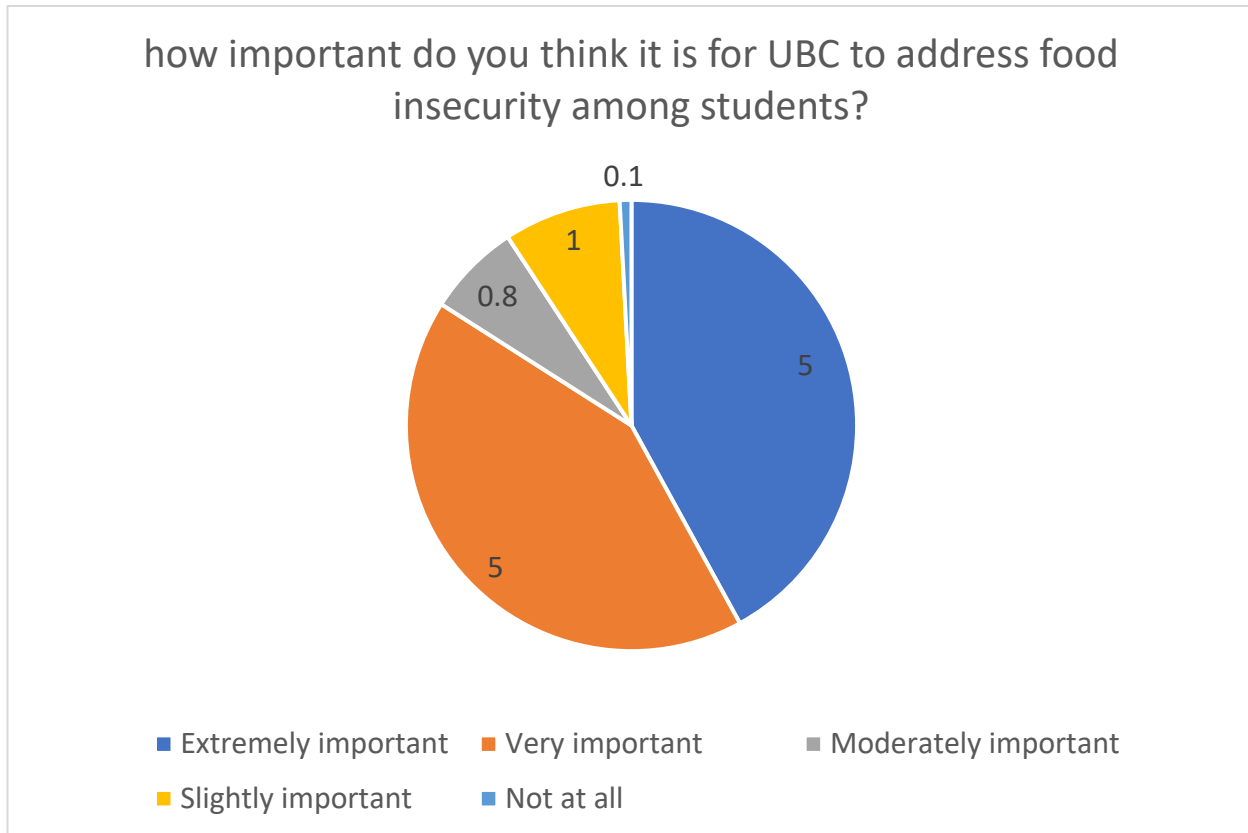
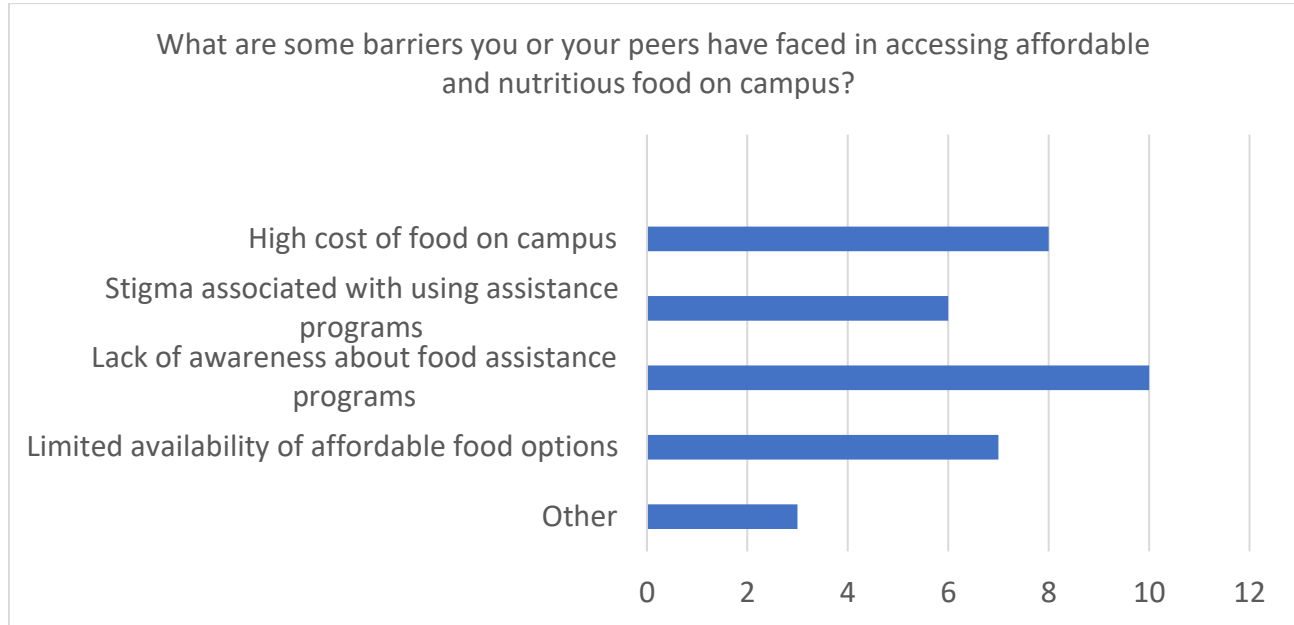


Figure 2. how important do you think it is for UBC to address food insecurity among students?

The survey result indicates that almost 80% of the respondents think that it is "Very important" or "Extremely important" for UBC (University of British Columbia) to address food insecurity among students. This suggests that a significant majority of the respondents believe that addressing food insecurity among students is a top priority for the university. The other response options were "Slightly important," "Moderately important," and "Not at all important," but these options received low percentages of responses.



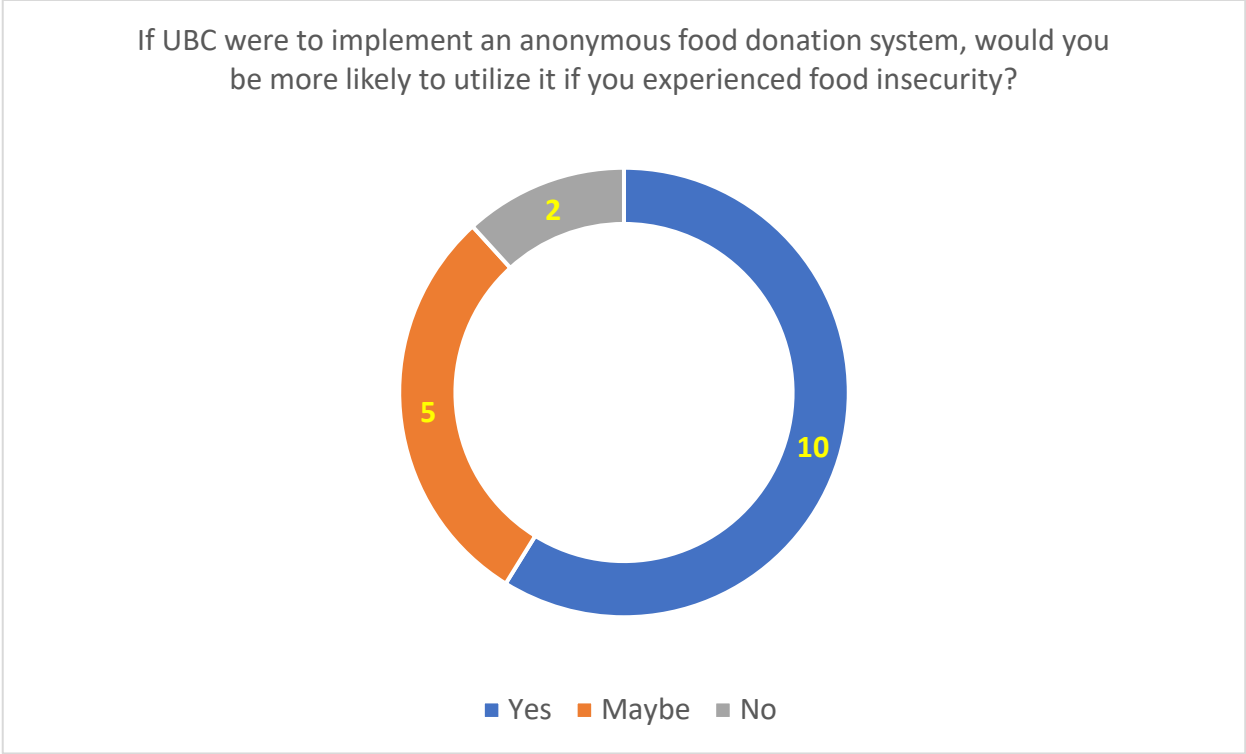
*Figure 3. What are some barriers you or your peers have faced in accessing affordable and nutritious food on campus?*

The chart shows the number of respondents who selected each option.

As we can see from the chart, the most cited barrier is the lack of awareness about food assistance programs with 30% of respondents selecting this option. The next most cited barrier is the High cost of food on campus options, with 22% of respondents selecting this option.

In addition, a significant number of respondents indicated that they or their peers have faced stigma associated with using assistance programs (17%) or lack of awareness about food assistance programs (20%). The chart suggests that there are multiple barriers that students face in accessing affordable and nutritious food on campus, and that these barriers may be preventing some students from getting the food they need to thrive.





*Figure 4 If UBC were to implement an anonymous food donation system, would you be more likely to utilize it if you experienced food insecurity?*

The respondents were given three options to choose from: "Yes", "Maybe", and "No". The chart shows the number or percentage of respondents who selected each option.

As we can see from the chart, 10 respondents or 66.7% of respondents selected "Yes", indicating that they would be more likely to utilize the anonymous food donation system if they experienced food insecurity. 7 respondents or 33% of respondents selected either "Maybe" or "No", indicating that they may or may not utilize the system.

Overall, the chart suggests that there is some interest among respondents in utilizing an anonymous food donation system if it were implemented by UBC and if they experienced food insecurity.

One interviewee

“I think one of the issues with the food assistance programs on campus is the stigma associated with using them. Even though they claim to be anonymous, they still check your UBC card and know who you are. I worry that this could deter students from using these resources, especially if they feel embarrassed or ashamed. It's important for these programs to find a way to truly make students feel anonymous and comfortable using them, so that everyone who needs assistance can access it without fear of judgment”

Another interviewee

"I find it frustrating that some of the food assistance programs on campus have limited operating hours. As a student with a packed schedule, it can be difficult to find time to access these resources when they're only available during certain times of the day. It would be helpful if the operating hours could be expanded to accommodate students with busy schedules and varying availability."

2. Analysis of the survey results and Summary of the Interviews  
(to be presented and completed)

## C. Evaluation of current programs and resources and identification of barriers to promoting sustainable food practices

### 1. Overview of current programs and resources and evaluation of their effectiveness and accessibility at UBC:

UBC offers various programs and resources to address food insecurity and promote sustainable food practices on campus, including UBC Sprouts, Agora Cafe, LFS|US Wednesday Night Dinners, UBC Farmers' Market, Fooood, UBC Food Hub, UBC Food Hub Market, UBC Meal Share Service, Acadia Food Hamper Program, and Campus Nutrition. While these programs have been established with the intention of addressing food insecurity and promoting sustainable food practices, their effectiveness and accessibility are limited by certain factors.

### 2. Identification of barriers to the programs:

One significant barrier is the limited operating hours of some programs, which can make it difficult for students with busy schedules or who may not be available during specific times to access these resources. Additionally, some programs may lack diversity in food options, which can be challenging for students with specific dietary needs or cultural preferences. For instance, the Agora Cafe only offers vegan and vegetarian options, which may not cater to the needs of students with other dietary restrictions. Financial constraints may also serve as a barrier to accessing these programs, even if some of them offer low-cost or free meals, as there may still be associated costs that some students cannot afford.

Furthermore, the stigma surrounding food insecurity may deter some students from seeking assistance or utilizing these resources. Students may feel ashamed or embarrassed to access these programs and may not want others to know they are experiencing food insecurity. Language barriers may also serve as a barrier to accessing these resources for international students who may not be proficient in English. Lack of awareness of the available programs and resources may also contribute to underutilization and hinder their effectiveness.

Moreover, some of the programs may lack the capacity to meet the high demand for their services, leading to longer wait times or even running out of food. This can create a sense of frustration and discouragement for students who are in need of immediate assistance.

Overall, while UBC has made efforts to address food insecurity and promote sustainable food practices through various programs and resources, there are still significant barriers that limit their accessibility and effectiveness. To improve the accessibility and effectiveness of these programs, UBC needs to identify and address these barriers through targeted interventions and policies that aim to reduce financial, social, and cultural barriers to food security on campus.

## D. Recommendations for addressing food insecurity and promoting sustainable food practices at UBC

### 1. Proposed solutions for addressing food insecurity at UBC

One possible strategy is to expand the hours of operation for existing programs to ensure that students with packed schedules can access the resources they need. For example, extending the hours of operation to include evenings and weekends could increase the accessibility of these programs for students who may not be available during traditional operating hours.

Another strategy is to offer a wider variety of food options to better meet the diverse dietary requirements and preferences of students. This could include providing more vegetarian, halal, kosher, and gluten-free options, as well as catering to cultural and regional food preferences. Additionally, partnering with local food banks and grocery stores to provide low-cost or discounted produce could increase access to fresh and healthy food options for students.

Ensuring anonymity for participants in programs is another potential solution to address the stigma associated with food insecurity. Providing an anonymous and confidential process for students to access these services can help remove barriers to seeking assistance and promote the utilization of these resources.

Finally, targeted outreach initiatives and materials in multiple languages can help raise awareness of existing programs and resources among international students and other underrepresented groups. This could include hosting information sessions and workshops in different languages, as well as providing translated materials and resources to ensure that all students have access to the information they need to address their food insecurity and promote sustainable food practices.

### III. CONCLUSION

#### 1. Summary and Overall Interpretation of Findings

The study aimed to evaluate the current programs and resources addressing food insecurity and promoting sustainable food practices at UBC, as well as to identify potential barriers and solutions. The survey and interviews conducted among UBC students revealed that food insecurity is a prevalent issue on campus, with more than 40% of the students rating their experience with the food donation program as average or below.

The current programs and resources at UBC were found to have some limitations in terms of accessibility and effectiveness. Limited operating hours and lack of diversity in food options were identified as significant barriers to accessing these programs. Additionally, financial constraints, the stigma associated with food insecurity, and language barriers were also identified as potential obstacles.

#### 2. Recommendations for Future Action

Aiming to improve sustainable and affordable food practices at UBC and address food insecurity, a number of recommendations were identified. These proposals include expanding the operating hours of existing programs to make them more accessible to students with busy schedules, providing a wider variety of food choices to better accommodate diverse dietary needs, ensuring anonymity for participants in food assistance programs to remove the stigma associated with food insecurity, implementing targeted outreach initiatives and materials in multiple languages to improve awareness and utilization of these programs.

These measures can improve the accessibility and effectiveness of existing programs and resources. It is crucial for the AMS, which represents and serves the student body, to prioritize these issues and take action to improve the food security and sustainability of UBC. By doing so, the AMS can have a significant positive impact on the UBC community and promote a culture of food security and sustainability on campus.

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V. Appendices

(to be presented and completed)