

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

Submitted to Alma Mater Society (AMS)

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By Chohyeon Kim, ENGL 301 Student

## Letter of Transmittal

2329 West Mall

Vancouver, BC, Canada V6T 1Z4

April 10, 2023

Alma Mater Society of UBC Vancouver

6133 University Boulevard

Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z1

Canada

Dear AMS,

I am writing to submit my report titled "Addressing Food Insecurity and Promoting Sustainable, Affordable Food Practices at UBC." This report was completed as part of my coursework for ENGL 301 and aims to investigate the prevalence of food insecurity among UBC students and propose strategies for promoting sustainable and affordable food practices on campus.

The report includes an overview of food insecurity and sustainable, affordable food practices at UBC, a review of current programs and resources, an analysis of survey and interview data, and recommendations for improving food accessibility and reducing food insecurity.

I believe that this report is valuable in understanding the issues faced by UBC students regarding food insecurity and in suggesting practical solutions to promote sustainable and affordable food practices on campus. I hope that this report will be useful to you and to the UBC community.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

CHO hyeon KIM

Chohyeon Kim

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Food insecurity, a growing issue among university students in North America, is also prevalent at the University of British Columbia (UBC), where many students struggle 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 the 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 was conducted 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

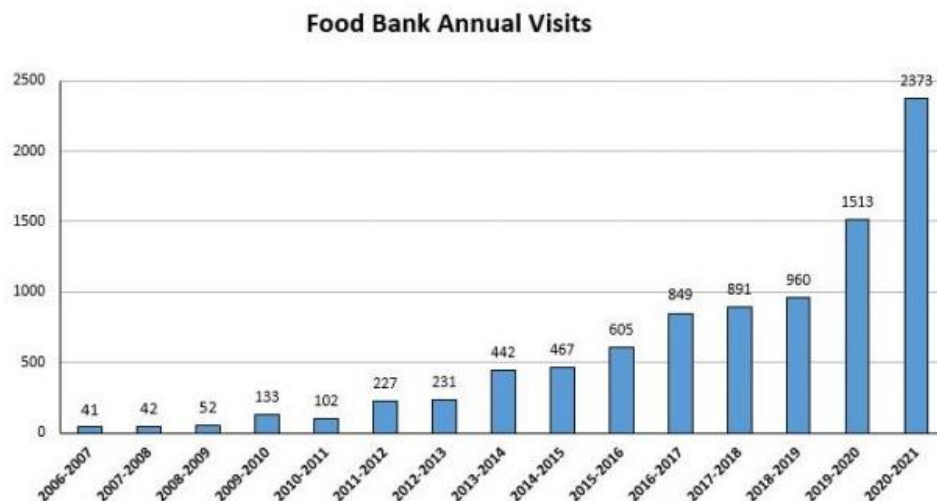
#### 1. Definition of Food Insecurity

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.



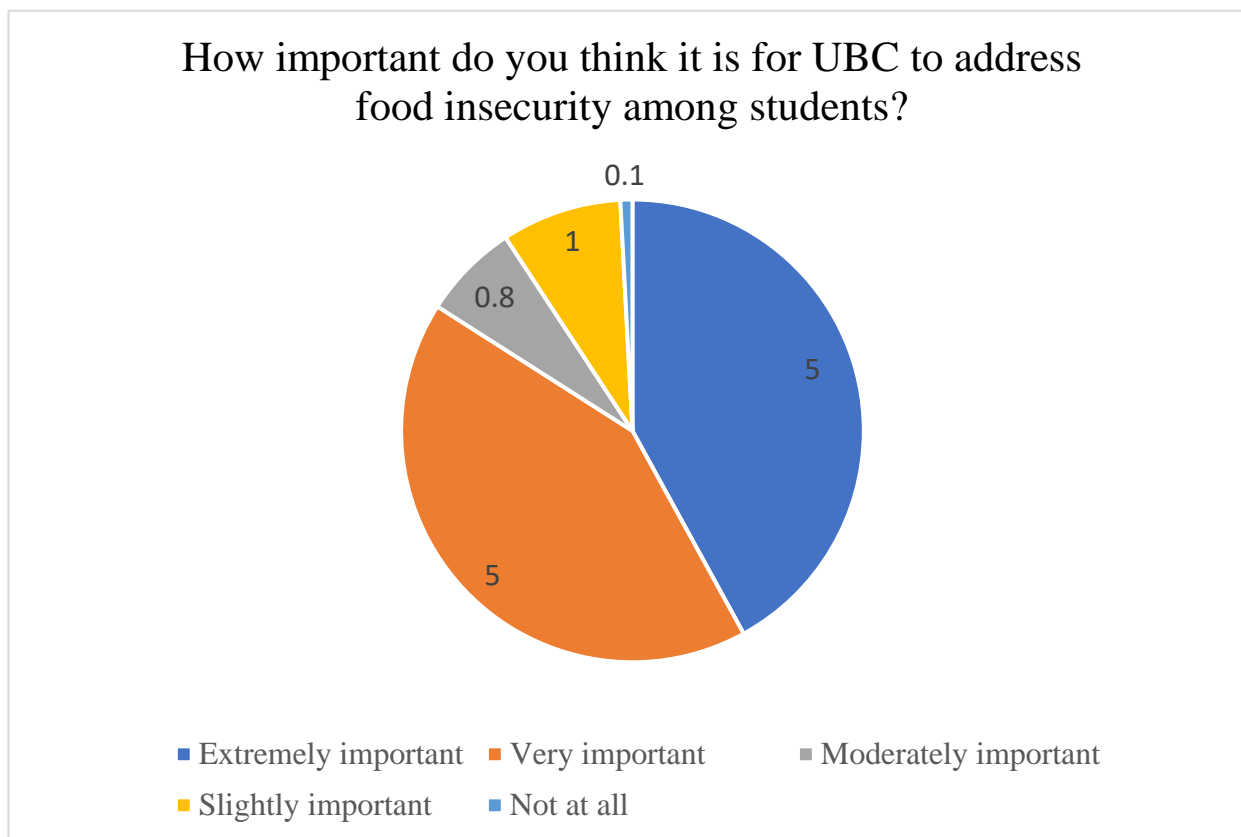
*Figure 1 Food Bank Annual Visits*

(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

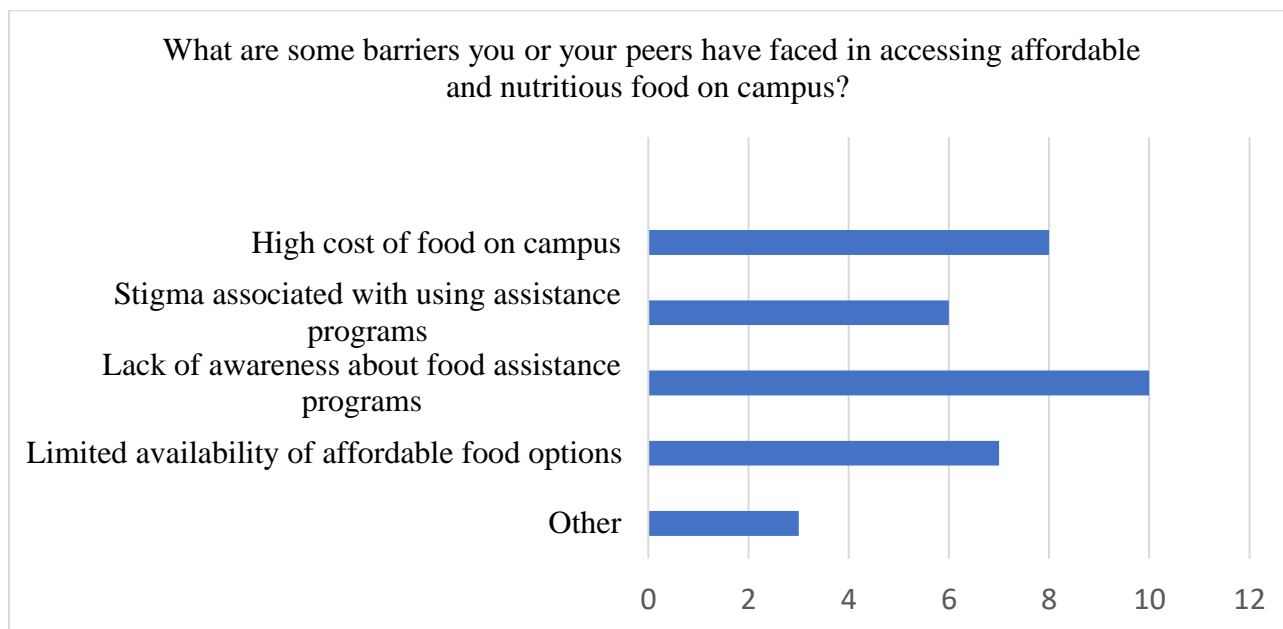
Two primary methods were utilized for gathering data in this study, an online survey and Interview.

### 1. Survey 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.



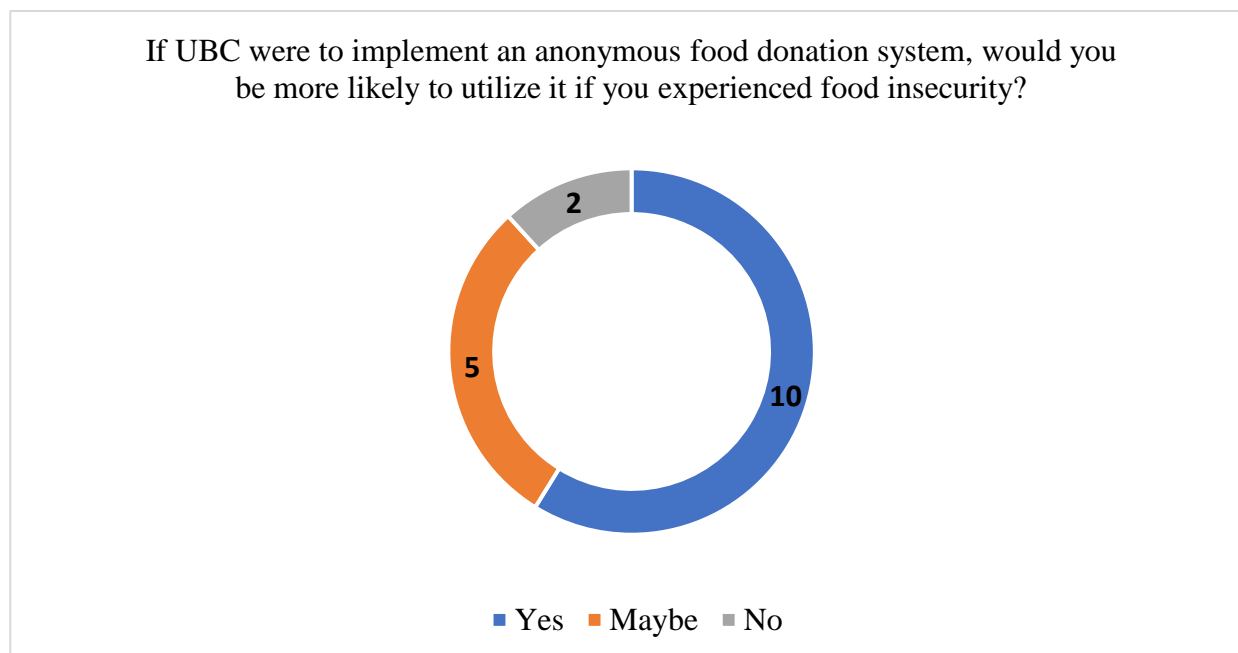
*Figure 3. What are some barriers you or your peers have faced in accessing affordable and nutritious food on campus?*

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 options on campus, 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 a 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.

## 2. Summary of the meaningful answers to the interview question.

There were some notable responses from the interviews.

One interviewee expressed,

"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 mentioned.

"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."

### 3. Analysis of the survey results and Summary of the Interviews

The survey conducted among UBC students revealed that addressing food insecurity is a top priority for the university community, with almost 80% of respondents indicating that it is "Very important" or "Extremely important" for UBC to address food insecurity among students. The survey also identified several barriers that students face in accessing affordable and nutritious food on campus, including a lack of awareness about food assistance programs, the high cost of food options, and the stigma associated with using assistance programs. The interviewees further emphasized the importance of addressing these barriers to improve the accessibility and effectiveness of existing programs, particularly by ensuring anonymity for participants in food assistance programs and expanding the operating hours of these programs to better accommodate students with busy schedules.

### **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 Farmer's Market, 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 their 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.

Assuring 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.

### 2. Feasibility and Potential Limitations of Proposed Solutions

While the proposed solutions have the potential to address food insecurity and promote sustainable food practices on campus, the implementation may be limited by certain factors. For instance, expanding the hours of operation of existing programs may require additional funding, staffing, and logistical arrangements. Offering a wider variety of food options may need to consider budget constraints and the availability of suppliers. Ensuring anonymity for participants in food assistance programs may require building trust with students and ensuring confidentiality. Targeted outreach initiatives may need to consider language barriers and cultural sensitivity and may require collaborations with student organizations and community partners.

Therefore, it is important to assess the feasibility of these solutions before implementing them and to identify potential limitations and challenges associated with their implementation. This can help ensure that the proposed solutions are effective and sustainable in the long run. Additionally, it may be necessary to adapt or modify the proposed solutions based on the feedback.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

#### **A. 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.

#### **B. Recommendations for Future Action**

Aiming to improve sustainable and affordable food practices at UBC and address food insecurity, several 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

### Interview Questions:

1. How familiar are you with the concept of food insecurity and its impact on students?
2. Are you aware of any existing programs or resources at UBC that address food insecurity and promote sustainable food practices? If so, which ones?
3. Have you or anyone you know ever participated in any food donation programs or utilized resources available at UBC to address food insecurity?
4. In your opinion, what can UBC do to make information about food insecurity and sustainable food practices more accessible to students?
5. Are there any aspects of the current food donation program that you think could be improved to better serve the UBC community?
6. What role do you believe the university should play in addressing food insecurity among its students?

### Survey Questions:

1. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being never and 5 being always, how often have you experienced food insecurity while studying at UBC?
2. Have you ever utilized the food donation program at UBC? (Y/N)
3. If you have utilized the food donation program at UBC, please rate your experience on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very poor and 5 being excellent.
4. What improvements would you suggest for the existing food donation program at UBC? (Select all that apply)
  - 1) Increase awareness and promotion.
  - 2) Enhance accessibility.
  - 3) Provide a more diverse range of food options.
  - 4) Implement an anonymous system.
  - 5) Other
5. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being not at all important and 5 being extremely important, how important do you think it is for UBC to address food insecurity among students?
6. How familiar are you with sustainable food practices or initiatives currently available at UBC? (1-5)
7. In your opinion, what role should the university administration play in promoting sustainable and affordable food practices on campus? (Select all that apply)
  - 1) Provide financial support for sustainable food initiatives.
  - 2) Collaborate with student organizations to develop and implement programs.

- 3) Offer educational resources and workshops on sustainable food practices.
  - 4) Encourage local food sourcing and waste reduction in campus dining facilities.
  - 5) Other
8. What are some barriers you or your peers have faced in accessing affordable and nutritious food on campus? (Select all that apply)
- 1) High cost of food on campus.
  - 2) Limited availability of affordable food options
  - 3) Limited access to fresh produce
  - 4) Lack of awareness about existing food assistance programs
  - 5) Stigma associated with using food assistance programs.
  - 6) Other
9. If UBC were to implement an anonymous food donation system, would you be more likely to utilize it if you experienced food insecurity? (Y/Maybe/N)