



<b>SUBJECT</b>	Food Insecurity Update
<b>SUBMITTED TO</b>	People, Community and International
<b>MEETING DATE</b>	November 20, 2020
<b>SESSION CLASSIFICATION</b>	Recommended session criteria from Board Meetings Policy: OPEN
<b>ACTION REQUESTED</b>	Please indicate requested Board action: No decision requested: for information
<b>SUBMISSION DATE</b>	November 2, 2020
<b>LEAD EXECUTIVE</b>	Vice-President Students
<b>PRESENTED BY</b>	Ainsley Carry, Vice-President, Students Marcia Buchholz, Vice-President, Human Resources Matt Dolf, Director, Strategic Support, UBC Wellbeing
<b>SUPPORTED BY</b>	Natasha Moore, Planning and Evaluation Advisor, UBC Wellbeing Sara Kozicky, Project Manager Food Insecurity, UBC Wellbeing Liska Richer, Manager, SEEDS Sustainability Program, C&CP Ernielly Leo, Applied Research Coordinator, C&CP Casey Hamilton, Campus Health Specialist, UBCO

## PRIOR SUBMISSIONS

The subject matter of this submission has been considered previously by the People, Community and International Committee on the following occasions:

1. [April 6, 2020](#) (OPEN SESSION)  
Action/Follow up: None
2. [September 12, 2019](#) (OPEN SESSION)  
Action/Follow up: None

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an update on food insecurity at UBC with a focus on COVID-19 implications, new data, and progress on key initiatives of the Food Security Initiative (FSI). We draw attention to the impact that COVID-19 has had on an already serious issue on our campuses with an example of an emergency food situation that was identified by a faculty member. Our data focus is on graduate students with the first UBC prevalence rates for this population provided by the Canadian Campus Wellbeing Survey (CCWS). Data shows that post-secondary students, in particular international students, continue to demonstrate rates of food insecurity higher than the BC population. The FSI joins the AMS and GSS in calling for immediate action by UBC to lift students out of poverty. Additionally, we highlight significant issues between UBCV and UBCO in policy and funding support.

## COVID-19 EXACERBATES FOOD INSECURITY

COVID-19 has exacerbated the already serious issue of food insecurity in the post-secondary student population, exemplified by an emergency food situation brought to UBC's attention by a faculty member. Compounding factors have pushed students, particularly international graduate students, deeper into financial precarity. Students have lost paid research and work placements, childcare, and family financial support while maintaining

expenses for tuition, textbooks, rent, food, and other costs of living. To highlight this challenge, a faculty member recently organized a short-term response to support graduate students going hungry by providing weekly emergency food hampers for approximately 100 students and their families with support from UBC Food Services and the Greater Vancouver Food Bank. The AMS has requested \$17,000 of the Incremental Tuition Revenue to expand and enhance their capacity to provide dignified, low-barrier services with the emergency food hamper service model in the medium term. However ongoing financial capacity is unclear. The FSI, AMS, and Food Services – in collaboration with other stakeholders – are working to establish longer term plans to innovate and dignify food insecurity resources on campus. Emergency food programs remain a band aid solution to an issue that is rooted in income inequality and poverty, more often affecting those already marginalised by systemic racism and institutionalised discrimination. In recognition of this, a core priority of FSI’s work is to identify and support UBC to evolve fundamental systems and structures that cause food insecurity.

### FOOD INSECURITY DATA: CCWS PROVIDES PREVALENCE FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Results from the Canadian Campus Wellbeing Survey (CCWS) piloted at UBC in November 2019 provide the first food insecurity prevalence rates for UBC graduate students. Data continues to show that students experience higher levels of food insecurity than the BC population which is 12.5%<sup>1</sup>. CCWS data confirms that this occurs not only at UBC but at other research intensive institutions as well.

Table 1: Students who are food insecure from UES 2019 and CCWS 2019

Source	UBC Vancouver			UBC Okanagan		
UES	Undergraduate Students	37%	n=1297	Undergraduate Students	42%	n=581
CCWS	Undergraduate Students	35%	n=586	Undergraduate Students	41%	n=263
CCWS	Graduate students	30%	n=227	Graduate Students	42%	n=51

Table 2: CCWS data for UBC and research intensive comparator university (n=3)

UBC			Research intensive comparator		
International graduate students	44%	n=145	International graduate students	29%	n=110
Domestic graduate students	23%	n=133	Domestic graduate students	19%	n=220

The 2019 CCWS undergraduate food insecurity prevalence rates are consistent with those in the 2019 Undergraduate Experience Survey (UES). Of particular concern, however, is food insecurity prevalence within the international graduate student population at UBC. The complexity and diversity of funding arrangements within faculties causes individual graduate students' income to vary considerably putting graduate students, and in particular international graduate students, at significant risk of food insecurity. The minimum funding requirement at UBC Vancouver is \$18,000 and at the upper end some scholarships provide \$50,000 (e.g. Vanier Scholarship). There is no minimum funding requirement for UBC Okanagan students.

There is also significant variability among demographic groups. Among people who identify as non-white and non-Chinese, for example, we see higher levels of prevalence. More analysis on demographics is underway.

### FOOD SECURITY INITIATIVE PROGRESS UPDATE

In working to both address immediate needs as well as engage in long-term systems change, FSI has made steady progress across a number of projects.

<sup>1</sup> Tarasuk V., Mitchell A. (2020). Household food insecurity in Canada, 2017-18. Toronto: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF). Retrieved from <https://proof.utoronto.ca/>

**Alleviate immediate pressures of food insecurity** and enhance community food security at UBC:

## Emergency Food Actions

- Digital swipe pilot program – planning underway for both campuses, providing students with dignified access to food dollars directly on their UBC card when faced with a food emergency.
- The *Digital Food Hub* will launch in March 2021, providing information to the UBC community including emergency food supports and food resources.

## Community Food Security Actions

- Engaging in exploratory work for the creation of UBCV *Community Food Hubs* including community consultation, student research projects, funding options (e.g. Campus as a Living Lab Grant), and partnership development (e.g. United Way of the Lower Mainland).
- Supported by the Provost Office and the Sustainability Scholar Program, a community consultation is complete for [envisioning a physical food hub](#) at UBCO. Phase 2 is underway with a focus on partnerships with local community food security organizations.

**Foster knowledge exchange and advocacy** efforts within UBC and beyond to improve fundamental systems and structures including:

- A series of [virtual events](#) for higher education students, staff, faculty, researchers, leadership and community partners planned for November 2020 and February 2021. The planning committee includes UBC, University of Guelph, University of Ottawa, McMaster University, and Meal Exchange.
- Supported by existing prevalence data and student-led applied research, food security was identified as a key issue in the AMS's September 2020 submission to Province of BC. In addition FSI is collaborating with AMS AVP on a focused food security submission to be delivered after the October provincial election.

**Deepen our understanding of food security** within the University context:

- Collaboration with [Canadian Campus Wellbeing Survey](#) (CCWS) successfully ensured that the 18-item HFSSM food security module would be available as an option for institutions to use. We are also developing a process to provide the survey for institutional staff and faculty.
- 20+ SEEDS, Sustainability Scholars, and Campus Health VOICE student-led applied research projects on food security across various campus operational partners and faculties.
- The Campus Health VOICE research project "[Food security at UBCO: What's your recipe?](#)" results are being finalized and shared back with the campus community. Results related to higher risk students groups will be shared with key stakeholders (e.g. Aboriginal programs and services, International programs and services, School of Graduate Studies, etc).

**CALLS TO ACTION****FSI echoes calls from the GSS, AMS, and SUO for UBC to act to lift all students over the poverty line.**

Steps to achieve this, as indicated by GSS in their September 2020 presentation to Board of Governors include:

- Raising guaranteed funding for UBC Vancouver PhDs to at least \$24,000/yr.
- Establishing a minimum funding policy for research masters students at both campuses.
- Indexing annual stipends and fellowships based on cost of education increase.

**FSI calls for equity for UBC Okanagan in resourcing their action and activities including:**

- Extension of funding policies for graduate students to UBCO, e.g. minimum guaranteed funding for PhD students at the same level as UBCV.
- Staffing resources for a Food Action Coordinator and Community Developer.
- Financial support for Community Food Hub space development.

**FSI calls for UBC to collaboratively establish conditions for tuition increases**, for example: meeting key indicators, development of an affordability plan, ongoing consideration of food security concerns.

**SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS**

1. None