

Food for Thought: Knowledge and Use of the Triton Food Pantry at UC San Diego

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Background

- Very low food security among UC San Diego undergraduates exceeds 20%, five times the California average
- The Triton Food Pantry provides free groceries to students
- The pantry is meant to be a short-term food security resource
- Items assigned points; students can visit once weekly and obtain 15 points worth of food (produce are zero points, but have quantity limits)
- Survey of public health undergraduates conducted to evaluate:
 - Knowledge and use of the pantry
 - Use among students with very low food security
 - Student perceptions of the pantry, adequacy of food received, and areas for improvement

Methods

- In February 2024, Qualtrics questionnaire containing Triton Food Pantry and 6-item USDA food security status modules was administered to undergraduate public health students
- Regular users = students who used the pantry \geq once/month
- Very low food security = 5 or 6 points on 6-point USDA scale
- Epi Info 7.2.6 used to examine frequencies and calculate prevalence rate ratios and p-values for the association between food security and pantry use

Results

- Response rate: 75% (366/486)
- 83% of students were aware, but only 18% had ever used the pantry
- 9% of students used the pantry at least once a month (regular users)
- Very low food security students were 2.3 times more likely to be regular users ($p=0.02$) and 3.6 times more likely to disagree that the amount of food received from the pantry was adequate ($p=0.007$)
- When all users were asked what they would like to see more of at the pantry, protein came first (48%), followed by produce (39%)

Conclusions

- Pantry awareness is high, but use is low, even among students with very low food security
- Few regular users, but regular use higher among students with very low food security
- Quantities received not adequate for very low food security students
- The Triton Food Pantry should publicize the program among those in greatest need, prioritize stocking foods that fit student preferences, and encourage use of other safety net resources for students in need

Students with very low food security are more than twice as likely to rely on the food pantry, but report not receiving enough food.

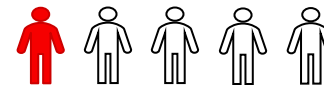


Awareness (N=360)



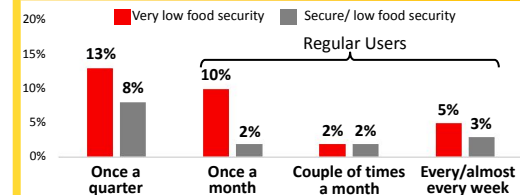
4 out of 5 students are aware of the Triton Food Pantry

Usage (N=299)



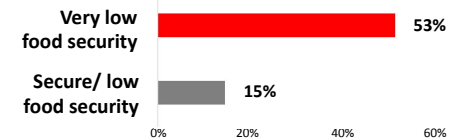
Only 1 out of 5 students use the Triton Food Pantry

Frequency of pantry use (N=299)



Very low food security students are **2.3x** more likely to be regular users

Users who disagree they receive adequate quantities of food from the pantry (N=51)



Very low food security students are **3.6x** more likely to be dissatisfied with food quantities

Rankings of what food items students would like to see stocked more often at the pantry (N=46)

