

**Profile of
Food Center and Pantry
University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee
2019 Regents Diversity Award Team Recipient**

Highlights from nomination materials:

- The mission of the Food Center and Pantry (FCP) is to ensure the entire UW-Milwaukee (UWM) community has nutritious food and key necessities in a welcoming educational space. A long-term goal is to take a holistic approach to food engagement through cooking demonstrations, public conversations, and community meals and to provide students with healthy, nutritious, and culturally affirming foods. These approaches will allow the FCP to move towards alleviating the stigma of food assistance and improve the health of students.
- The FCP is a student-led effort in the establishment of a food pantry based on the finding of food insecurity in university students – a significant barrier to student success. Students worked with multiple units on campus to collectively find a solution to this problem. Food insecurity is defined as being without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food.
- The FCP's sole staff person, Quincy Kissack, assistant director of Student Association Professional Staff, oversees its daily operation and supervises and schedules student employees and volunteers.
- Based on a 2016 survey administered by the UWM Student Association, 49.4% of student responders indicated that they experienced a time when they did not have enough food for themselves. Also, 38.9% of students reported to have cut a meal size or skipped meals because of lack of money for food, and 19.5% lost weight because they didn't have enough money for food. Multicultural, non-traditional, and first-generation college students are among the highest demographic groups to experience food insecurity.
- In spring and summer 2018, the FCP recorded 168 student pantry users. Fall 2018 semester, the FCP expanded from 9 hours per month to 16 hours per week. In September and October 2018, the FCP recorded 302 student visits. Orientation for more than 75 students, faculty, and staff who volunteer in the pantry stresses FCP's guiding values of dignity, privacy, respect, welcoming atmosphere, acceptance, and accessibility. Since fall 2017, FCP staff have been working with IT and students to develop appropriate security measures to protect the privacy and ensure anonymity of pantry users while at the same time being able to track visits for evaluation purposes.
- The FCP is also supported by countless other campus units, organizations, and community partners. For example, the Student Union provides the space; restaurants created a fundraiser where customers round up their purchases to the nearest dollar and the proceeds go to the food pantry; and the Center for Community-Based Learning, Leadership, and Research help organize large-scale food drives.

In the words of colleagues:

- "What began with a small group of students has now transformed into a campus-wide initiative. The result is a campus culture of understanding that we can collectively work to ensure that the basic dietary needs of our students are met." —*Mark A. Mone, Chancellor, UW-Milwaukee*
- "The UWM Food Center and Pantry is truly a team effort and a collaboration. Its success represents the commitment UWM students, faculty, and staff have in addressing issues of equity. While the UWM Food Center and Pantry is not a permanent solution to end food insecurity, it elevates some obstacles that are harmful to students' educational experience. It also creates a more equitable learning space and demonstrates that students' health and well-being are a priority particularly among students who are economically disadvantaged." —*Mai Yer Yang, Interim Director, Inclusive Excellence Center, UW-Milwaukee*