



Foodiversity
3141 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104
609.922.5074

March 20, 2020

John Fry
President, Drexel University

Dear President Fry:

Within this letter, you will see our team's report regarding the issue of food insecurity on Drexel University's campus. Food insecurity, as defined by the USDA, means a "lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life." In our report, we touch on the key reasons for why we believe this issue exists at Drexel and how we can assuage it through the use of a pop-up grocery store on campus. This report explains how this pop-up grocery store would pose as a value proposition for Drexel University as it would assuage major concerns of students as well as better Drexel's campus appeal.

In assessing the needs of students at Drexel, our group looked at the root causes of food insecurity as well as surveyed students and organizations on campus to assess their feelings on the topic. From our results, we noticed a strong need for more satisfying and healthful options on campus. Additionally, we noted how proper access to food is necessary in helping students complete their education and focus on their work. Therefore, we believe a pop-up grocery store would be in Drexel's best interest to create as it could not only improve retention rates and grade point averages on campus but it would also provide a remedy to a long-term problem.

We hope you find our report informative on the issue of food insecurity on campus and we hope you see how this issue could be assisted with our recommendations. If you have any questions, or if you would like to discuss our ideas further, please email us at apa46@drexel.edu, cap424@drexel.edu, or am4282@drexel.edu. We look forward to receiving your response.

Sincerely yours,

Angela Myronovych

Angela Myronovych

Alexander Arcidiacono

Alexander Arcidiacono

Courtney Pellegrino

Courtney Pellegrino

Encl.: Report

Enough Food for Everyone

**Angela Myronovych, Alexander Arcidiacono, and
Courtney Pellegrino**

Students at Drexel University

Prepared for

**John Fry, President of Drexel University
Drexel University**

March 20, 2020

Table of Contents

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	iii
ABSTRACT.	iv
INTRODUCTION	1
Background	1
Problem	2
Purpose	3
Scope	4
DISCUSSION	4
Food Insecurity on Campus.	4
<i>Main Issues of Food Insecurity</i>	4
<i>Potential Remedies</i>	6
Benefits to Reducing Food Insecurity.	7
Drexel Community Opinions	7
Drexel Students Opinions	8
CONCLUSION	9
RECOMMENDATIONS	10
REFERENCES	13
APPENDIX	14

List of Illustrations

Figure 1. How do you perceive the cost of Drexel’s food?	1
Figure 2. How do Drexel’s food options satisfy your needs?	2
Table 1. Do you think your cost of attendance at Drexel affects your ability to afford food?	5
Table 2. Willingness to Shop at a Low-Cost Grocery Store Versus a Food Pantry	9
Figure 3. Percentage of Interest in Grocery Store from Food Insecure Respondents	9

Abstract

Given Drexel's limited and often unaffordable options around campus, students on campus do not always have access to the food needed to live healthy, active lives. Instead, students face food insecurity, often causing them to wonder how or when they will get their next meal. As Drexel has the eight highest tuition rates in the country, in addition to being located around food deserts, Drexel's campus poses a further detriment to students in food insecure situations often leading to worsening grades or student drop out. To remedy this situation, Drexel could ease the concerns of students by creating a pop-up grocery store on campus. In providing subsidized food in a location relative to Drexel students, it offers students the proximity and affordability needed to mitigate the factors associated with food insecurity. With the lack of nutritious food and limited grocery stores in the surrounding Drexel area, this pop-up grocery store would give Drexel what its students are missing. Additionally, providing access to food would then potentially allow students to focus more on school, as opposed to worrying about where their next meal is coming from. As a result of better concentration and alleviated stress, students would be able to perform better in their academic pursuits as well as have the means to remain in school. Therefore, a pop-up grocery store will make students feel more secure on campus and that allows Drexel to reap the benefits of a more capable and focused student body.

Introduction

Background

On college campuses around the country, food insecurity poses an obstacle to students' health and well-being. As defined by the USDA, food insecurity is the "lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life." At Drexel, students face this issue as a result of the lack of healthy, inexpensive food options on campus. While there are options around campus, including restaurants, lunch trucks, and coffee shops, these options can be expensive and limiting to students looking for more health conscious and economical food options. To see how many students Drexel's lack of healthful and economic options affect, a survey was conducted using 55 students from Drexel's community. Based on the results, as seen by Figure 1 (shown below), 78% of respondents feel that the food on campus is too expensive, while 22% thought it was neutral, and 0% thought it was inexpensive. As seen by Figure 2 (page 2), 74% of respondents feel that the food does not satisfy their nutritional needs ("Drexel University Food Insecurity Survey"). Therefore, if students cannot afford, nor have the option to, sustain themselves then food insecurity can threaten students' abilities to perform their best or lead a healthy life.

Figure 1. How do you perceive the cost of Drexel's food?

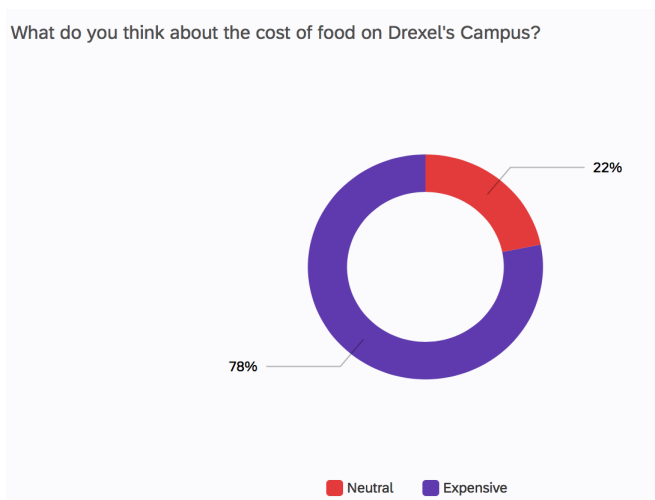
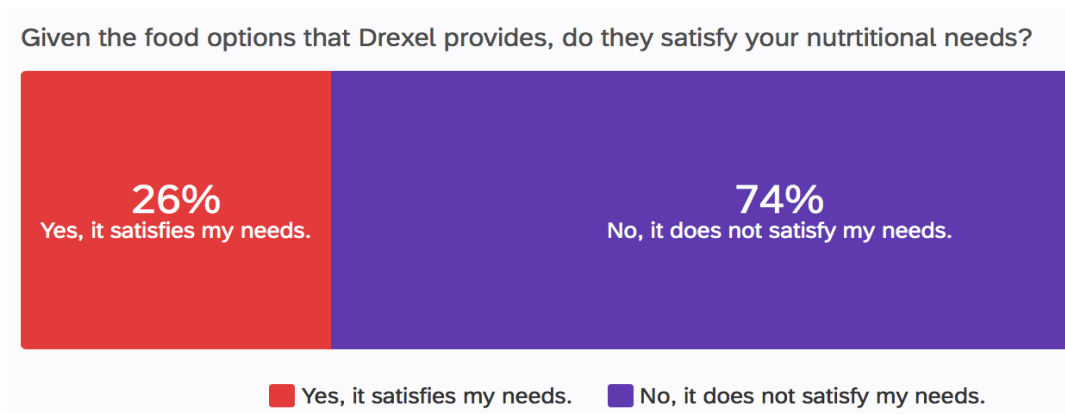


Figure 2. How do Drexel's food options satisfy your needs?



Given that a students' academic prowess relies on their food intake, it is essential that students receive proper nutrition to keep grades up and remain in school. Without proper nutrition, it can lead to students becoming unengaged in lessons, and at Drexel, where terms are only ten weeks long, students need to remain as focused in their lessons as possible. However, often times, students cannot concentrate nor afford to eat as a result of the additional stresses that Drexel creates as a result of the cost for tuition, textbooks, or housing. With all of these worries on students' plates, students sometimes end up having to choose between eating a meal or investing in their education, and these decisions can cause students to drop out. Therefore, it is in the best interest of Drexel's administration to prioritize the needs of students' food consumption in order to sustain happy, successful, and healthy students, as this could help lead to an increase in student's academic abilities and retention.

Problem

The main issues of hunger at Drexel can be attributed to financial and geographical complications as these hinder students from obtaining food on a regular basis. Given the

expensive price of food around campus, in addition to the exorbitant cost of attendance at Drexel, students without access to an expendable budget are unable to afford food. Therefore, this can lead to feelings of inconsistency, which plagues students since they may not know how they will be able to afford their next meal. Additionally, given the geographical strain of proximity to affordable food, students face a similar issue of not knowing where they will be able to purchase their next meal. Given that Drexel is located in Philadelphia, students' access to food is stifled as a result of city living and food deserts. Also, food options on campus are not the most healthful, or the most quality options, causing students to walk off campus or take public transit to one of the very few grocery stores in the area. With these physical and monetary limitations at hand as a result of Drexel's campus, students cannot afford nor can they reach the food options needed to live healthy, active lives, putting them into a position of food insecurity.

Purpose

Through survey responses, it is shown that most Drexel students suffer from some degree of food insecurity. Food insecurity affects students and Drexel University should offer assistance in creating a short-term solution to this pervasive issue. As some of our group members are food insecure, we know first-hand what it is like to not have access to foods we want nor have the funds to afford them, and we also know friends at Drexel who have experienced the same. We also have witnessed the effects that hunger can cause, including fatigue and lack of concentration, and we have seen the way in which these feelings severely affects one's academic abilities. Therefore, to provide a better educational experience for ourselves and members of Drexel's community, we believe Drexel needs to aid in the creation of a resolution to this

concern. In creating a remedy to this issue, Drexel will help relieve some of the stress and concerns that are associated with finding and affording food, allowing students to stop worrying and start learning.

Scope

This report focuses on the issues and causes of food insecurity and gives a recommendation of what Drexel can do to treat this problem based on student and community opinions. Additionally, it reveals the benefits associated with feeding a community in need and how it can lead to higher retention rates as well as stronger academic scores.

Discussion

Facing Food Insecurity

Main Issues of Food Insecurity

For students at Drexel, one of the main issues impeding students from food security is the cost of attendance. For instance, to attend Drexel University, students pay the eighth highest tuition in the country, giving \$72,281 in exchange for room and board, tuition, and fees. While about 95% of the student population is awarded aid or grants, federal student aid still fails to cover expenses and as a result, students must take out loans and find jobs in order to pay their bills. As a result of needing to pay these excessively high costs, students are left to make choices between priorities. For many students, it's whether to pay for school and other bills prior to food, or it is choosing whether to skip class and work to afford to buy food (Anderson, 2017). When

students were surveyed to see if they thought the cost of Drexel affects their ability to afford, out of 55 respondents, about 71% said yes, as seen from **Table 1** (“Drexel University Food Insecurity Survey”). Therefore, students often are willing to pay more for the necessities of an education as opposed to paying for the necessity of fulfilling their physiological needs.

Table 1. Do you think your cost of attendance at Drexel affects your ability to afford food?

	Yes	NO
# of Students	39	16

Since many students value their education, they are highly motivated to attend school, even despite being food insecure; however, the effects of food insecurity can hinder a students’ academic performance. For instance, a study performed by University of North Texas with 27 participants, showed that about 67% of participants thought if they quit college or had full-time employment, they would not be food insecure. However, students undertake the implications of food insecurity and financial uncertainty because they believe a college degree will lead to improved living standards later on. Yet, as a result of taking on this risk of food insecurity, students experience lack of concentration and hunger, which in turn can only cause detriment to their grades. For instance, 30% of participants from that same study who were food insecure cited lower grades and inability to concentrate due to hunger (Henry, 2017). Also, food insecure students are more likely to report a lower grade point average than those food secure students (Payne-Sturges, 2018). A reason for this also could be part in fact due to campus’ limited options so as a result that students do not have access to the healthier, or more natural foods, that aid in brain function, nor can they always travel to access the better foods that they need.

Given that some college campuses are surrounding food deserts, like Drexel is, there are limited resources in obtaining food that will aid in leading a healthy, active lifestyle. For instance, since transportation can pose a barrier to food, students often must make the most of their limited shopping trips and must buy cheaper food in bulk that stretches across long periods of time. Additionally, students tend to buy foods that are quicker and easier to prepare, and while they wish they had access to healthier foods, they can only afford and purchase what is cheap and convenient to them (Henry, 2017). Therefore, the limited options surrounding campuses pose obstructions to students' abilities to be food secure, which is why colleges look into obtaining remedies to these issues through food pantries or low-income grocery stores.

Potential Remedies

Looking to other college campuses and food desert areas as inspiration, there is a rise in food pantries and pop-up grocery stores. For colleges, food pantries have become increasingly popular, increasing from one to 450 over the course of 10 years, they have started to aid in lessening food insecurity by providing free food to students in need or at a financial disadvantage. While these food pantries are extremely beneficial to students, there is a stigma surrounding them as students feel a sense of shame or guilt in obtaining food this way. For instance, students are worried about whether they will be seen or recognized for needing assistance, find it embarrassing to have food handed to them, or have too much pride to not provide for themselves (Henry, 2017). Therefore, another option often sought for is a subsidized pop-up grocery store. These stores are established mainly in food deserts to provide low-income areas with fresh produce and healthy groceries. While these stores can be costly, they rely on

donations, support from larger grocery stores, and volunteers to sustain themselves. Additionally, these subsidized grocery stores often make students feel more comfortable than a food pantry does as they still pay for food, but at a cheaper rate than a typical grocery store. Therefore, instead of losing one's pride or feeling ashamed, students in turn feel less burdened and more empowered as they can afford what is needed. As both of these options have their own pros and cons, the perspectives of students and organizations from Drexel showed whether students would rather have a food pantry or a grocery store on their campus to fight food insecurity.

Organizations and Student Opinions on Recommendations

Drexel Organization Opinions

The Drexel University Center for Hunger-Free Communities was contacted for their recommendations regarding how community partners felt about the grocery store and food pantry options. The Center for Hunger-Free Communities helps research and develop ideas to address issues of poverty and hunger. In doing this, they advocate for communities of food insecurity in the surrounding Philadelphia area, and they fight for policy changes surrounding hunger. In asking the operations manager of the Center, Natalie Shaak, what she thought of the idea of a food pantry, she claimed that this can be stigmatizing to a community of food insecure people. Also, she asserted that some see these food pantries as a solution to the problem when they are more of a bandage to the issue. She stated that a more helpful way to lessen food insecurity would be in providing more affordable education, and offering more conversations on this important subject. In regards to the grocery store, she sees how this would address the

availability of foods, and claims having access to affordable, healthy food is important for communities to grow. Yet, Natalie still pinpoints that these issues only touch the surface of food insecurity, and claims more needs be done in addressing the important conversations about systemic reasons that lead to food and economic insecurity.

Drexel Students Opinions

In conducting students' sentiments on the topic of whether to add a food pantry or a low-cost grocery store to campus, we interviewed a student affected by food insecurity and surveyed a sample of 55 students from Drexel's campus, 21 of which identified themselves as food insecure. Surveying our first student, freshman Gil Axelrod, he told us he was on the school meal plan, yet he still felt food insecure as he asserted the options around campus are too expensive, and there are not enough to sustain his needs. He suggested a grocery store would be beneficial in providing more healthful options. Similar to Gil, our student survey concluded that a grocery store would assist the needs of Drexel's food insecure students more than a food pantry. From the data, it was evident there was a stigma associated with the food pantry as 4 more respondents, who identified as food insecure, chose that they were not willing to shop in a grocery store as they were to shop at a food pantry as exemplified in **Table 2** (page 9). Additionally, from those 21 respondents who were food insecure, 81% were more interested in having a grocery store as opposed to a food pantry as seen from **Figure 3** on page 9 ("Drexel University Food Insecurity Survey"). Therefore, this information revealed to us that our recommendations lie within the grocery store as it reduces the stigma surrounding food

insecurity while still offering affordable, sustainable options to those students who need it at Drexel.

Table 2. Willingness to Shop at a Low-Cost Grocery Store Versus a Food Pantry

	Low-Cost Grocery Story	Food Pantry
# of Respondents Willing	20	16
# of Respondents Not Willing	1	5

Figure 3. Percentage of Interest in Grocery Store from Food Insecure Respondents



Conclusion

While a food pantry or a low-income grocery store is not going to completely eradicate food insecurity, it is a short-term fix to a systemic problem. There will need to be more education surrounding this issue on campus. In creating this low-cost grocery store, it will aid Drexel in controlling the effects food insecurity has on its students. As food insecurity affects students'

health, wellness, and education abilities, this grocery store would be essential in limiting those risks, and it would offer a convenient, healthy way for students to feel a bit more food secure. Additionally, this grocery store would better suit the community, as it is what students want, and since it lessens the stigma surrounding food insecurity. With an subsidized grocery store available to these students, students would not feel shame but would feel more secure knowing they can afford food a price that fits their needs.

Recommendations

At Drexel, over half of students will face food insecurity. While there are some food options around campus, these options are very expensive and limited. Food insecurity causes students to not perform their best and it affects their health.

Given the conclusion of this report, it is clear that students are in need of a grocery store as it would provide Drexel's campus with affordable and nutritional food options in a convenient location. While a grocery store is a short-term fix, the long-term effects for Drexel would put students in a better position in terms of education and retention on campus. In offering recommendations, two helpful suggestions is to instate this grocery store: choosing a location and establishing a partner.

Choosing a Location

In setting up a location for this store, some excellent locations would be to have them be somewhere local to Drexel students, especially in a distinct location on campus. Therefore, given Drexel's recent closures of Wahoo's and Joe's Coffee, there are two potential real estate spaces

on 32nd and Chestnut Street to host this store. These spaces are prime locations for this grocery store as it would be situated on campus for students as well as be in close proximity to classes. Additionally, these locations are seeking renters, and since the previous restaurant expenditures have been unsuccessful, this location could prove more fruitful as it provides food at a lower cost as opposed to offering expensive menu items. Also, given student feedback, it seems students will be apt to attend this store, which will better the potential of that grocery store remaining there, aiding in creating a solid, long term investment that the university should consider.

Establishing a Partner

In creating a partnership with a grocery store to host this pop-up grocery store on campus, Trader Joe's is a great choice. As a result of Trader Joe's more affordable grocery options, this partnership would create a popular destination for groceries with an even more cost effective twist for students. Through a university partnership, Drexel University can leverage its large customer base and unmet market need for affordable groceries with Trader Joe's to create an agreement. This agreement would include plans to bring the brand to University City while adapting it to the needs of college students, which could help in working towards having certain products be subsidized. The subsidy will be met in the middle between the university and Trader Joe's. Drexel provides the market and in return Trader Joe's offers its products, thus creating a value proposition for both players involved.

Financials

Regarding the financials of bringing a grocery store to campus, administration must analyze other similar universities that brought a grocery store onto campus. In the case of the

University of South Florida, the university set a contract with Publix grocery chain on land that it is leasing from the university. The store pays the university \$130,000 annually for the first five years of the 20-year contract after which the amount increases 10% every five years. Depending on whether or not Drexel owns the real estate that a Trader Joe's can rent, Drexel can agree to lease the property in return for an annual payment ranging from \$100,000–\$250,000.

Overall, it is recommended to pursue a university partnership with Trader Joe's to satisfy the needs of college students while bringing in cash flow into University City.

References

- Anderson, N. (2019, Jan 10). Choosing between books or food, college students struggle with food insecurity report says government should do more to combat hunger. *Spokesman Review*
Retrieved from
<http://ezproxy2.library.drexel.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy2.library.drexel.edu/docview/2165678911?accountid=10559>
- Busta, H. (2018, December 7). U of South Florida brings grocer Publix to campus. Retrieved from <https://www.educationdive.com/news/u-of-south-florida-brings-grocer-publix-to-campus/543847/>
- Henry, L. (2017). Understanding food insecurity among college students: Experience, motivation, and local solutions. *Annals of Anthropological Practice*, 41(1), 6-19.
doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy2.library.drexel.edu/10.1111/napa.12108>
- Payne-Sturges, D., Tjaden, A., Caldeira, K. M., Vincent, K. B., & Arria, A. M. (2018). Student hunger on campus: Food insecurity among college students and implications for academic institutions. *American Journal of Health Promotion : AJHP*, 32(2), 349-354.
doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy2.library.drexel.edu/10.1177/0890117117719620>

Appendix

I. Qualtrics Student Survey Questions

1. Do you feel food insecure on campus?
2. How satisfied are you with the food options currently on Drexel's campus?
3. Given the options that Drexel provides, do they satisfy your nutritional needs?
4. What do you think about the cost of food on Drexel's campus?
5. Do you think your cost of attendance at Drexel affects your ability to afford food?
6. Do you think there are enough grocery options on campus?
7. If there was a low-cost grocery store local to campus, would you shop there?
8. If there was a food pantry local to campus, would you shop there?
9. Would you rather have a food pantry or grocery store on campus?

II. Questions Asked to Operations Coordinator, Natalie Shaak at Center for Hunger Free Communities

1. On your website, one of the Center for Hunger Free Communities' visions is to have "a nation where all members of the community partner to keep families economically secure." What is this center currently doing to achieve this mission?
The Center participates in research, advocacy, and program development to support economic security, specifically we try to include community members actively as part of that process. In the past we have run programs such as Witnesses to Hunger (a photovoice program that empowers those experiencing hunger to advocate policy makers for changes to systems impacting economic insecurity), a site of Children's Health Watch (a research study out of St. Christopher's hospital that looks at food insecurity, Adverse Childhood Experiences, racism, and other health outcomes in families in Philadelphia), and the EAT Café (a pay what you can restaurant that allowed community members the opportunity to enjoy a restaurant no matter their ability to pay). Our current active program is the Building Wealth and Health Network - a healing-focused, financial

education program that focuses on peer support, overcoming trauma and developing habits of saving. More on each of these can be found on our website. Moving forward we are transitioning to become more of an incubator to research, develop and test new ideas for addressing poverty and hunger.

2. As there are many definitions to food insecurity, how does your center define it?
We utilize the federal government/USDA's definition of food insecurity "a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life." The government measures household food security with an 18-question Food Security Scale (FSS) administered each December by the Census Bureau. A household's food security status is determined by the number of questions it answers affirmatively.
3. What do you see as the biggest issue plaguing members of the food insecure community?
The largest issues that we focus on are (in no order): low income/low wage jobs, inadequate safety net programs (TANF/cash welfare, SNAP, etc.), adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)/trauma, discrimination, lack of affordable housing/childcare/healthcare/education.
4. What do you think has been the center's best approach to fighting food insecurity?
Our research and programs have tested a number of different approaches. Advocacy focusing on changing policy has been the most effective on a larger scale. Additionally, on an individual level, the Building Wealth and Health Network has shown to have a strong impact on lessening food insecurity. We have a peer reviewed article pending publication on this topic. Our Phase III results show that household food security decreased by 6% a year after the program. More outcomes can be seen in our reports here:
<https://www.centerforhungerfreecommunities.org/building-wealth-and-health-network/network-outcomes>
5. Where do you receive aid from in helping achieve your visions?
The Center is funded through a number of grants from various foundations and private donors. You can see a full list here:
<https://www.centerforhungerfreecommunities.org/about-us/funders>. We do not receive any direct funding for our research/programs from Drexel/School of Public Health.
6. To help with food insecurity, many universities started food pantries or pop-up grocery stores on campus. What are your thoughts on creating a food pantry or pop-up grocery store? Have you tried in the past? If so, what has been the benefit or detriment in doing this?
Providing access to food for those who need it is helpful, but it is more of a bandage over the problem than a solution. Providing food is a one-time action but it does not address

the policies and practices that create the situation in which people become food insecure in the first place. Our Center focuses on addressing the causes of food insecurity and try to work outside the charity/food pantry system that relies on donations and has a stigma surrounding it that can keep people from utilizing services. We have not created a food pantry as an intervention or program for students or the community. The only negative impact I can see of this approach is that some may see it as a solution and therefore stop having the important conversations (about cost of education, cost of housing, low income jobs, etc.) necessary to truly address food and economic insecurity.

7. For University City, do you believe the solution to food insecurity is a food pantry or a grocery store? What do you think would be a viable solution to University City's issues? No. A food pantry/grocery store will never solve food insecurity. A more effective approach would be to focus on the issues that lead to food insecurity by finding ways to provide affordable housing, childcare, healthcare, and education along with providing universal basic income, changing welfare and other safety net systems to be more effective, healing personal/community trauma and addressing racism, discrimination, and the stigma related to poverty.
8. Do you see the shutdown of grocery stores like Fresh Grocer as a further hindrance to those in this community getting the food they need? Do you believe the issue lies more in cost or availability of food?
Having access to affordable, healthy food is important for communities to grow and be healthy. As noted above, food insecurity is about more than just food so I would not be able to say the cost or availability of food is the bigger issue. If changes we made so all people could have the money necessary to afford the food they need to lead a healthy life, that would address availability too I guess.
9. How do you see food insecurity mixed in student experiences? Do you notice that many of the children you help are worse off in school as a result of their food situation? How has your center made changes to aid in bettering this situation if so?
Our programs do not typically work directly with kids (other than a summer meals program pilot we ran last summer), but we do know food insecurity is experienced by all kinds of people at all stages of life. We primarily work with the caregivers/parents of children and research children through surveys of parents. There is extensive research outside of our Center that shows that lack of access to healthy food has a negative impact on students' academic performance. We support the results of those studies.
10. What do you think of the food offered currently on Drexel's campus? Do you believe it enough to sustain those on campus, or do you think there are significant improvements

that can be made to the dining options?

I don't think our office is suited to make a statement on the food options at Drexel for students as that has not been included in any of our research. However, we do acknowledge that the cost of education and housing can make it difficult for some students to be able to access the food they need to be successful at the University.

III. Student Interview with Food Insecure Freshman Gil Axelrod

1. Do you believe Drexel food is enough to sustain those on campus?

No.

2. Do you think there are enough grocery options on campus?

The amount is not enough and it is too expensive.

3. Are you on the Drexel meal plan? Why or why not?

Yes, because I was required to be on it.

4. Have you heard of the term "food insecurity"? If so, how would you define it?

Food insecurity is anyone who is struggling to feed themselves.

5. Do you feel food secure/insecure on campus?

I feel in-between.

6. To help with food insecurity, many universities started food pantries or pop-up grocery stores on campus. What are your thoughts on having a food pantry or pop-up grocery store at Drexel University?

I think it will be helpful to many students.

7. Would you rather have a food pantry or grocery store on campus?

Food pantry. We already have a store.