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### Feeding a Need on Campus

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# Feeding a Need on Campus



Just in time for Thanksgiving the grand reopening of [Governors State University's Food Pantry](#), gave Jaguars another reason to be grateful.

The new, larger pantry, relocated from the Jaguar Den to an area near the gaming lounge, will supply nonperishables and amenities as before, but will also now include fresh items like fruits and vegetables, dairy products, and meat.

At the grand re-opening ceremony, Governors State staff and students, as well as officials from agencies across the state discussed the soaring need for food banks on campus. The pantry, sponsored through [Center for Student Engagement and Intercultural Programs](#), is in response to that need.

While all food is appreciated by those in need, fresh food is a necessity according to Deloris Walker, SNAP-Ed Educator at the University of Illinois and partner of the GSU Food Pantry.

"It's important not just to provide, but to nourish. This is a shop with healthy items available—produce, yogurt, meat, etc., and recipes to help you use these items," she said.

Dr. Robert Clay, Executive Director of the Center for Student Engagement and Intercultural Programs, recognized the impact of the food pantry to student success.



“Services like the Food Pantry and GSU4U are an important and critical contributions to student persistence and success,” he said.

The GSU Food Pantry was created in 2014 and initially provided just nonperishable food items until the expansion of [GSU4U](#) provided students with the opportunity to receive DEN Bags filled with emergency necessities such as personal care items such as toothbrushes, razors, and soap. The food pantry has historically been supported by student clubs, teams and organizations along with faculty and staff efforts to maintain the pantry.

In 2017, Governors State took part in the largest national survey assessing the basic needs security of university students with the Wisconsin HOPE Lab.

[The study revealed that 74% of GSU](#) students reported facing basic needs insecurities over the past year, more than two times the national average for a four-year university. This study was crucial to understanding the new face of hunger at the university and was a driving force to improve not just the GSU food pantry, but the lives of GSU students.



In spring, the Northern Illinois Food Bank and the Community Foundation of Will County created a grant to provide Governors State with refrigeration and shelving in order to offer perishable items to students.

But more than just providing students with what they need, the focus for the new pantry is offering students clearer pathways to success.

To Jennifer McIntyre, Programs Specialist at Feeding America and partner to the GSU food pantry, the expanded food supply is simply part of providing quality education to students.

“This is one way the University is communicating back to students that they care. These resources are just part of getting an education, there should be no stigma here. When students use the pantry they should be thinking that they deserve a quality education,” she said.

And these elements of comfort are important to GSU.

Archana Liggins, Agency Relations Area Leader for the Northern Illinois Food Bank and GSU alumna, sees the benefit of these resources being available within the university itself. “If I think back to when I went here, if something had happened that would have made me food insecure I would have been so much more comfortable turning to GSU



for help,” she said.

The pantry was moved to a larger space to accommodate the new resources and plans were made to open as soon as possible. Start to finish, the expansion took about six months. Dianne Korizon, the Chief Strategy Officer of Northern Food Bank, noted to the audience at the reopening, that this process happened quickly as Governors State was clearly eager to aid students.

“Initiatives like this help students achieve their dreams,” she said.

The food pantry is now open Monday through Thursday (hours subject to change) but students experiencing food insecurities outside of normal food pantry hours may stop by the Center for Student Engagement & Intercultural Programs to receive assistance.

This impressive initiative is a step towards total university security. Corey Williams, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students, celebrated the opening but challenged GSU to do more.

“We’re proud, but we want to see this go further,” he said.