**Background**

- Food pantries are found to be of a solution to hunger issues on campus by providing food to the students at little to no cost.1,4
- Campus food pantries act as emergency food assistance for students who are struggling with food related issues specially International students.5,6
- There is limited data available to describe college students' awareness of existing food pantries and their usage for food acquisition and its benefit among international students who rely on the use of this service.

**Objective**

- To get a broader understanding of the importance of the food pantry as a food resource facility on campus using a case study with doctoral students from Latin-America
- To identify drivers, and barriers to using this resource, and propose solutions to enhance the service quality

**Methods**

- Semi-structured interviews were conducted during fall 2022
- Qualitative best practices (Big-Tent) was followed for quality purpose
- Twelve Ph.D. students from Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, El-Salvador, Mexico, and Panama were recruited using homogeneous sampling technique.

**Data Analysis**

- Interviews were recorded and then transcribed verbatim
- Data saturation occurred when no new themes emerged among all participants
- A two-cycle coding was conducted:
  - First phase: Elemental coding technique.
  - Second phase: Cumulative coding technique.

**Results**

**Four themes surrounding the food pantry service emerged:**

- **Limited finances as a motivator to use the service:**
  - “Whenever I have to pay the tuitions and fees uh, … I have limitations for supplies in the rest of the month, or maybe two months... Then I start thinking about what to buy or maybe other ways to get food, and that is when those programs help a lot.”

- **Churches as a complement to food assistance:**
  - “I also use very often the food provided the churches... They provide good quantity of food, and they provide food to take home. And also, they help us if we need some transportation to deliver the food to our home and offering free lunch for the students.”

- **Transportation:**
  - “I was going with my box, and sometimes it was heavy, especially if you get a canned food… I had to walk to the bus stop with all the things that I was having. Sometimes I had to do two trips.”

- **Misinformation of the service existence:**
  - “I don’t think they give enough advertising of the food pantry between the students. I got information about the food pantry because one of my friends told me that there is a resource to get free food... If he didn’t tell me about that, I will never get there.”

**Three themes emerged as proposing solutions to enhance the service quality:**

- **Effective communication:**
  - “I think there should be like a better, communication with international students, so they know that they can find services that they don’t know exist... like using electronic resources that we have right now.”

- **Mentorship program:**
  - “If you’re coming for the first time, It will be helpful to have someone whom you could talk, ask and clear all the thoughts that you might have when you came.”

- **Strengthen partnerships with key food stores and founding donors:**
  - All participants agree that the food pantry needs to create and establish partnerships with key supermarkets surrounding the university.

**Conclusions**

- The experiences of the participants using the campus pantry revealed a key facilitator of food access in the search for nourishment on campus.
- There is a need to further increase the promotion of this resource as well as build a coalition of food access support within the university environment to develop inclusive programs for international graduate students.

**References**