

# Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior

Advancing Research, Practice & Policy

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## Campus food pantries lead to healthier public university students

*New research published in the Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior outlines how campus food pantries have the potential to reduce students' food insecurity, decrease depressive symptoms and improve perceived health*

**Philadelphia, June 21, 2022** – While access to food is a national concern, college students are experiencing food insecurity at a rate four times higher than the general public. A [research article](#) featured in the [Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior](#), published by Elsevier, discusses how students' use of a campus food pantry can positively affect their physical health, mental health and lead to improvements in sleep.

"In 2015, we found that 40% of University of California (UC) students were experiencing food insecurity, a finding consistent with other research," states corresponding author Suzanna Martinez, MS, PhD, Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, University of California, San Francisco, San Francisco, CA, USA. "This prompted the State of California to allocate funding so that by 2018 all UC campuses had a food pantry. Our study was the first to look at the impact these pantries had on changes in student health."

The researchers conducted an online survey of 1,855 students at 10 University of California campuses with questions about their general health before and after visits to the food pantry. The results showed that having access to a food pantry directly improved students' perceived health, reduced the number of depressive symptoms they experienced, increased their sleep sufficiency, and boosted food security.

Co-author Michael Grandner, PhD, MTR, Department of Psychiatry, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ, USA, adds, "More than half of the students in our group reported being a first-generation student, and

nearly half were Pell Grant recipients. It's possible these students were already at a disadvantage when funding their basic needs while at college."

"While UC food pantries began as an emergency response to the high prevalence of student food security, this study provides evidence that they play a critical role in helping students meet their basic needs on a regular basis," Dr. Martinez concludes. "Long-term solutions to address student food security are needed."

Consequently, these findings could be used to advocate for state or federal funding to support the work required to establish food pantries on college campuses nationwide and review college student eligibility for and access to federal assistance programs such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

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### **Notes for editors**

The article is "Campus Food Pantry Use Is Linked to Better Health Among Public University Students," by Suzanna M. Martinez, MS, PhD; Gwen M. Chodur, MSPH, RDN; Erin E. Esaryk, MPH; Sevan Kaladigian, MA; Lorrene D. Richie, PhD, RD; and Michael Grandner, PhD, MTR (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jneb.2022.03.001>). It appears in the *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, volume 54, issue 6 (June 2022), published by [Elsevier](#).

The article is openly available at [https://www.jneb.org/article/S1499-4046\(22\)00091-4/fulltext](https://www.jneb.org/article/S1499-4046(22)00091-4/fulltext).

Full text of the article is also available to credentialed journalists upon request; contact Eileen Leahy at +1 732 238 3628 or [jnebmmedia@elsevier.com](mailto:jnebmmedia@elsevier.com) to obtain a copy. To schedule an interview with the author(s), please contact Suzanna M. Martinez, MS, PhD, at [suzanna.martinez@ucsf.edu](mailto:suzanna.martinez@ucsf.edu).

This research was supported by the University of California (UC) Basic Needs Initiative (PI, Suzanna M. Martinez).

An audio podcast featuring an interview with Suzanna M. Martinez, PhD, and other information for journalists are available at [www.jneb.org/content/media](http://www.jneb.org/content/media). Excerpts from the podcast may be reproduced by the media with permission from Eileen Leahy.

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The *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* (JNEB), the official journal of the Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior (SNEB), is a refereed, scientific periodical that serves as a resource for all professionals with interest in nutrition education and dietary/physical activity behaviors. The purpose of JNEB is to document and disseminate original research, emerging issues, and practices relevant to nutrition education and behavior worldwide and to promote healthy, sustainable food choices. It supports the Society's efforts to disseminate innovative nutrition education strategies, and communicate information on food, nutrition, and health issues to students, professionals, policymakers, targeted audiences, and the public.

The *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* features articles that provide new insights and useful findings related to nutrition education research, practice, and policy. The content areas of JNEB reflect the diverse interests of health, nutrition, education, Cooperative Extension, and other professionals

working in areas related to nutrition education and behavior. As the Society's official journal, JNEB also includes policy statements, issue perspectives, and member communications. [www.jneb.org](http://www.jneb.org)

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