



**SWIPE OUT**

**HUNGER**

**STUDENT HUNGER IS REAL.  
WE CAN HELP END IT.**

# *Campus Food Pantries: Insights From a 2023 Survey*

**Swipe Out Hunger**

**March 2024**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>BACKGROUND</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>LESSONS LEARNED</b>	<b>8</b>
CAMPUS LEADERS CHARACTERISTICS	8
CAMPUS PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES	10
Programs and Resources Offered	10
Marketing/Advertisement	12
Pantry Inventory	13
Refrigeration	15
Distribution	16
CAMPUS ENGAGEMENT AND MANAGEMENT	18
Organizational Anchors	18
Staffing	19
Student Involvement	20
Technology	21
BIGGEST CHALLENGES AND WINS	22
Challenges	22
Wins	24
The Duality of Challenges and Wins	25
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>NOTABLE QUOTES</b>	<b>28</b>

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**MOST IMPORTANT THANKS TO THE**  
Swipe Out Hunger Campus Network

### WRITTEN BY

Christine Tonhu Nguyen, Research Fellow

### ADDITIONAL SUPPORT PROVIDED BY

Sydney Monegan, Director of Programs

Janelle Raymundo, Director of  
Communications

Jazmin Lopez, Communications  
Coordinator

Tenille Metti Bowling, Communications  
Consultant

This is a project of

### SWIPE OUT HUNGER

Swipe Out Hunger is the leading national nonprofit committed to ending college student hunger. Swipe Out Hunger collaborates with colleges and universities to promote on-campus solutions, policy and advocacy, and community building practices to address students impacted by food insecurity.

Since 2010, Swipe Out Hunger has enabled 12.3 million meals across more than 750 campuses in all 50 states and Canada. For more information, visit [swipehunger.org](https://swipehunger.org).



Check out our [Annual Campus Leader Survey Dashboard](#) for more insights into the data!

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the fall of 2023, Swipe Out Hunger conducted a comprehensive survey of college campus pantries to better communicate the infrastructure and the overall basic needs landscape in higher education.

The assessment focused on critical aspects such as sourcing, distribution, programming, available resources, and finances. This report offers insight into the barriers and facilitators that campus food pantries are currently grappling with amid increasing rates of food insecurity among college students.

This report also draws comparisons with the 2021 Campus Pantry Survey conducted by Swipe Out Hunger. The 2021 survey predominantly focused on infrastructure and provided insights into the implications of the pandemic on-campus pantries: this year's assessment involves a detailed comparison of similar characteristics. Questions about services offered, staffing, marketing, inventory, and technology were specifically analyzed to discern trends and changes over the two years.

One area of celebration that stood out in our analysis are the leaders that continue to build this field. Campus pantries and food security programs often go above and beyond addressing food insecurity. The students and staff involved in these programs often pioneer comprehensive support systems within their communities, including assisting students in accessing supplementary services and extending their support to specific student communities, such as parenting and international students. These campus leaders' have a proactive approach and holistic dedication to supporting all students' needs.

The team also noticed the barriers to success that often arise in food security. A look at the internal and systematic challenges unique to 355 college food pantries revealed that the top three challenges included funding, inventory, and staffing. Below is a breakdown of some of those barriers:

1. **Funding:** Challenges in **securing consistent funding, maintaining streams of funding, and obtaining grants** (22%). The process of finding and securing institutional or external grants is challenging. However, campus pantries in the Swipe Out Hunger network reported that receiving the Hunger Free Campus Grant from their state substantially alleviated their financial burden.

2. **Inventory:** Challenges in **obtaining donations, maintaining inventory, and ensuring a consistent supply of fresh foods** (14%). Pantries are struggling to sustain their inventory due to the influx of student users, highlighting the urgent need for long-term, sustainable solutions and funding.
3. **Staffing:** Challenges in **securing full-time staff, maintaining adequate staffing levels, and recruiting volunteers** throughout the academic year (11%). A notable trend this year in staffing challenges was the significantly higher turnover of staff, potentially reflecting the “Great Resignation” phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> In 2023, there was a US-based employee turnover rate of 3.8%, which reflects the broader societal trends impacting employment patterns. This trend underscores the importance of addressing funding issues to secure and retain paid staff members, with initiatives such as the [Hunger Free Campus Bill](#).

### How Swipe Out Hunger programs help campuses address these challenges:



**Direct funding:** Swipe has facilitated \$870,500 directly to campus pantries since Fall 2021 through its Swipe Grants Program.



**Referrals:** Swipe facilitates relationships between pantries and key partners that provide free or discounted pantry management software, cold storage solutions, hygiene products, and other much-needed items on campus.



**Connections:** Swipe builds a peer-to-peer network and encourages the exchange of information and ideas between campus partners and students.

---

1. Navigating Employee Retention in 2023: Insights and Trends. (2023). LinkedIn.  
<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/navigating-employee-retention-2023-insights-trends-pedagog/>

# BACKGROUND

Food insecurity is a leading public health issue in the United States and has been found to impact college students at a higher rate than the general public.<sup>2</sup> It has persistently posed a significant detriment to college students' health, academic achievement, and psychosocial well-being. The first article documenting food insecurity among college students was published in 2009,<sup>3</sup> showing that the campus surveyed had at least a 21% rate of food insecurity. These rates continue to rise more than a decade later. The rising prevalence of food insecurity, coupled with the increasing costs of academics and living expenses, results in long-term, detrimental outcomes among this group.

A recent assessment conducted found that **1 in 3 students experience food insecurity**, a figure growing since the pandemic.<sup>4</sup> College students experiencing food insecurity are more likely to experience adverse physical and mental health outcomes that can manifest in diminished academic performance and lower reports of academic achievement.<sup>5</sup> These challenges are further exacerbated among students who are Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and mixed race/ethnicity.

Colleges and universities have responded to this basic needs burden by creating a patchwork approach, hoping to fill the gap left by inconsistent federal safety net policies and social support services.<sup>6</sup> Institutions have established food pantries aimed to address food insecurity among their student body. While these pantries help mitigate barriers to accessing food and/or other basic needs resources, they often face limitations in infrastructure and sustainability.

---

2. Conrad, A. G., Tolar-Peterson, T., Gardner, A. J., Wei, T., & Evans, M. W. (2022). Addressing food Insecurity: A qualitative study of undergraduate students' perceptions of food access resources. *Nutrients*, 14(17), 3517. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu14173517>

3. Hagedorn-Hatfield, R. L., Hood, L. B., & Hege, A. (2022). A Decade of college student hunger: what we know and where we need to go. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 10, 837724. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.837724>

4. Snelling, A., & Hagedorn, R. (2021). 1 in 3 college students face food insecurity – expanding SNAP benefits on campus will help stave off hunger. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/1-in-3-college-students-face-food-insecurity-expanding-snap-benefits-on-campus-will-help-stave-off-hunger-156360>

5. Kim, Y., Murphy, J., Craft, K., Waters, L., & Gooden, B. I. (2022). "It's just a constant concern in the back of my mind": Lived experiences of college food insecurity. *Journal of American College Health*, 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2022.2064714>

6. *Food Insecurity On College Campuses: The Invisible Epidemic*. (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1377/forefront.20220127.264905>

This report discusses the experiences and perspectives of **355 U.S. college and university food security programs** providing insights into the current landscape of their programming, resources, challenges, and notable achievements. It also illustrates how pantries have navigated the challenges posed by the pandemic, and the innovative adjustments they have made to traverse this new landscape and support their students and communities. These findings contribute to the growing body of literature by offering valuable insights into the infrastructure of college and university pantries, highlighting their pivotal role in supporting students and effectively addressing the persistent issue of food insecurity.

Overall, this report highlights the creativity and resiliency of these resources, positioning them as the leading frontrunners in the ongoing battle to address student food insecurity. We thank the students and staff that continue to push this important issues into the spotlight for their time and energy.



# METHODOLOGY

*Sample:* Swipe Out Hunger conducted a Campus Leaders Survey in 2023 to assess the current status, needs, and work of Campus Leaders and their food pantries. The final version comprised 52 questions, taking approximately 28 minutes to complete. Participation in the survey was required to become a member of the Swipe Out Hunger network. Additionally, participants who completed the survey were eligible for grant funding. A total of 355 individuals representing institutional campus partners of Swipe Out Hunger were invited to participate in the online survey administered via SurveyMonkey. We received a high final survey response rate of 74%.

*Quantitative survey data:* The survey dataset was cleaned by removing duplicates and incomplete responses. The dataset was then merged with institutional data obtained from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) of the National Center for Education Statistics,<sup>7</sup> such as school size, school type (sector), undergraduate enrollment rates, graduation rates, percentage of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), percentage of Minority Serving Institutes (MSI), percentage of institutions in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), and percentage of students receiving federal/grant aid. The frequency distributions of these institutional descriptors were examined.

*Qualitative survey data:* The SurveyMonkey word cloud function was used to generate graphical representations of word frequency, with more frequently occurring words displayed in larger font sizes. This method helped identify salient key terms from the free-response questions. Broad themes were created based on the identified key terms, and categorized. Within each categorized theme, specific keywords were identified. Due to resource constraints, a 10% sample of responses for each free-response question was randomly selected and these responses were manually categorized by theme. The free-response question for challenges and wins was an exception; all responses were analyzed.

---

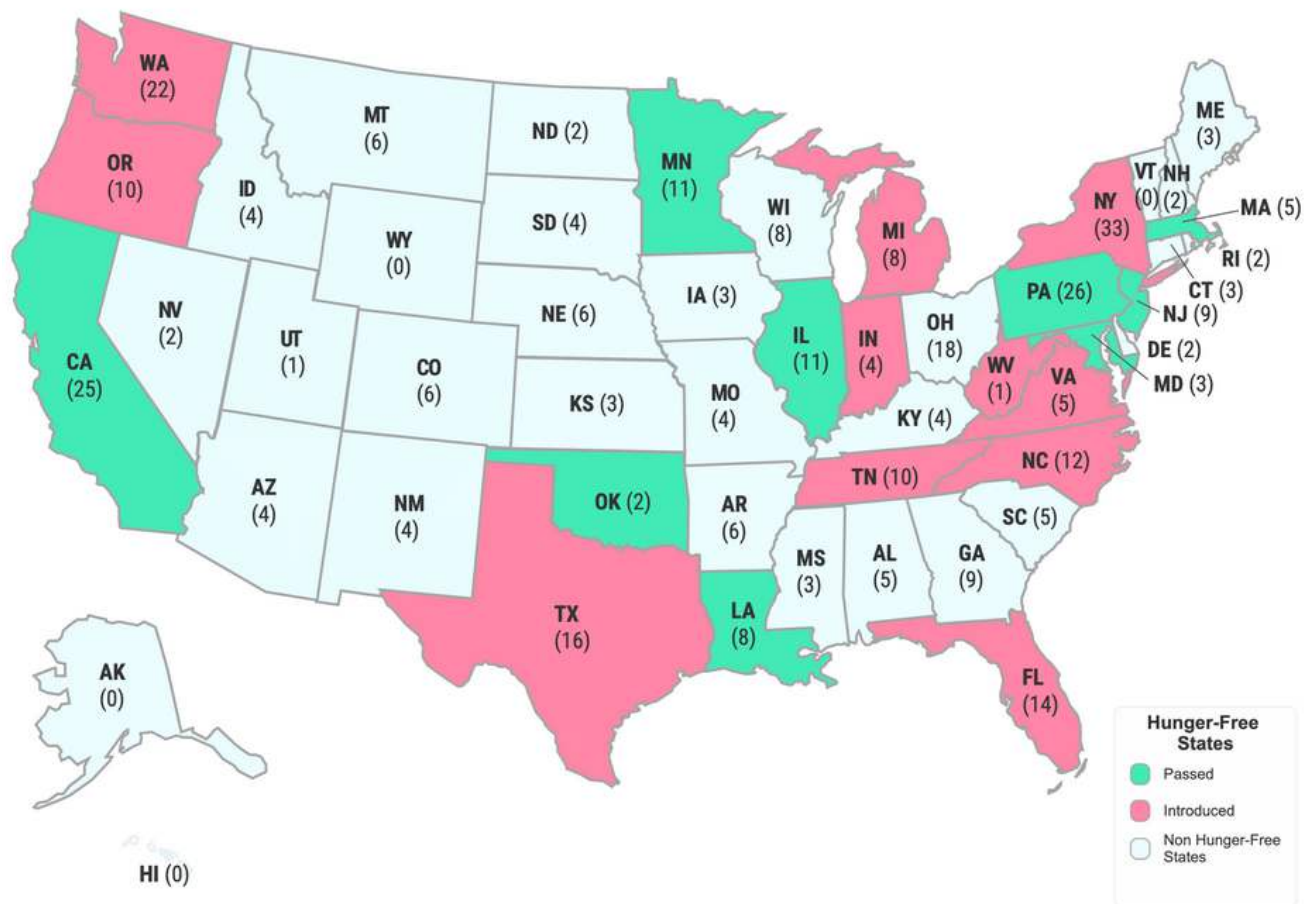
7. <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data>

# LESSONS LEARNED

## Campus Leaders Characteristics

A total of 355 campus leaders from U.S. colleges and universities participated in the survey. These participants represented institutions situated in states where the Hunger Free Campus Bill, aimed at providing funding to public colleges to tackle student hunger, has either been introduced or successfully passed. The growing adoption of the bill reflects the efforts of Swipe Out Hunger and its student advocates and community partners. However, the large number of campus leaders from states lacking such legislation underscores the importance of Swipe’s work and the pressing need for wider implementation of measures to alleviate student hunger across the country.

**FIGURE 1.** Map of the participating campus leaders across the United States as of the publication of this document (March 20, 2024).



**FIGURE 2. Characteristics of Institutions with Campus Pantries**

<b>N*</b>	335
<b>School Type</b>	
Public	70%
Private (not-for-profit)	30%
Private (for-profit)	0%
<b>School Classification</b>	
Historically Black College or University (HBCU)	2%
Minority Serving Institute (MSI)	24%
<b>Undergraduate Population</b>	
Less than 5,000	39%
5,000 - 9,000	24%
10,000 - 19,000	19%
20,000 or more	14%
<b>Degrees Offered</b>	
Baccalaureate or above	64%
Associate's and certificates	24%
Not primarily baccalaureate or above	12%
Graduate degrees only	1%
<b>Financial Characteristics</b>	
Percent of undergraduate students awarded federal, state, local, institutional, or other sources of grant aid	34%
Percent of students receiving Pell Grant**	44%

*Not sum to total number of institutions due to incomplete data frame from IPEDS*

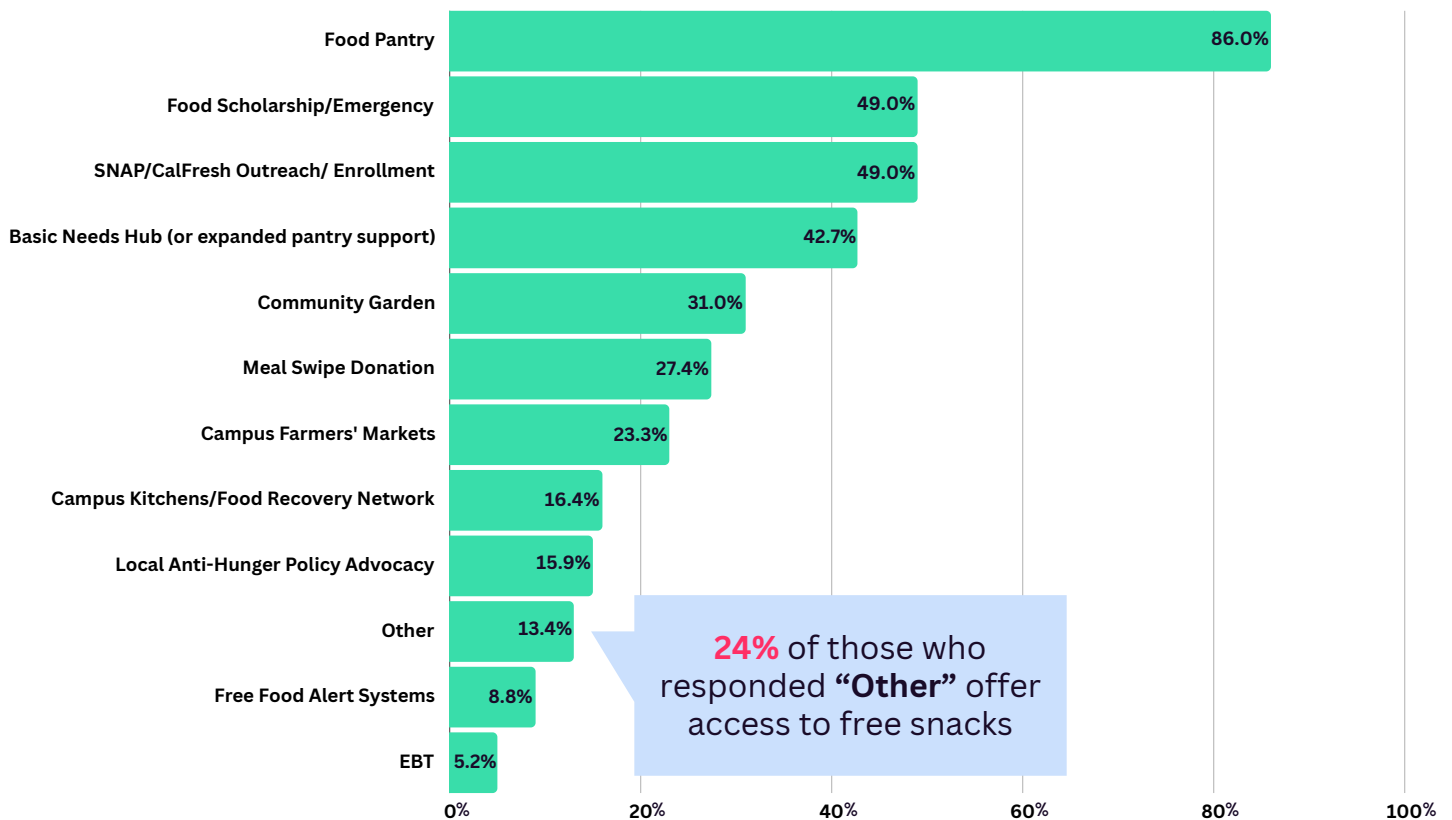
*\*\*Percentage is from IPEDS database, not the Campus Leader Survey*

# Campus Programs and Resources

## Programs and Resources Offered

Campus leaders implemented robust programs throughout their college and university campuses to address the increasing needs of both their student body and the surrounding communities. The majority of campuses have **food pantries (86%)**, with nearly half implementing initiatives such as **food scholarships/emergency grants (49%)** and **SNAP/CalFresh outreach/enrollment support (49%)**. These findings underscore a strong commitment to providing financial aid and governmental assistance.

**FIGURE 3.** Current campus programs offered



Qualitative analysis revealed that students who needed support beyond what existing programs could provide were still able to be supported. Pantries offered referrals to external services or provided additional supportive measures, such as connecting students with alternative food resources. This holistic approach shows that campus pantries recognized the limitations of their programs, but still found ways to support their students.

Additionally, the solid prevalence of **Basic Needs Hubs (42.7%)**, (see description of a Basic Needs Hub below), closely aligning with the 2021 rate of Basic Needs Hubs (45%, n = 160) indicates a sustained commitment to holistic support. Noteworthy, but less common programs, include **campus farmers' markets (23.3%)**, **campus kitchens/food recovery networks (16.4%)**, and **local anti-hunger policy advocacy (15.9%)**. The data suggests a concerted effort to variance of support mechanisms, emphasizing the diversity of the student body as well as the multifaceted approach campus leaders adopt to combat food insecurity.



*“A Basic Needs Hub ideally acts as a virtual and physical hub to support students in their journey to access essential services that impact health, belonging, and overall well-being.” - [UC Berkeley](#)*

*“We had a student who was **in tears because they were able to have a meal card to eat during finals week. They had exhausted their resources as the semester wrapped up.**”*

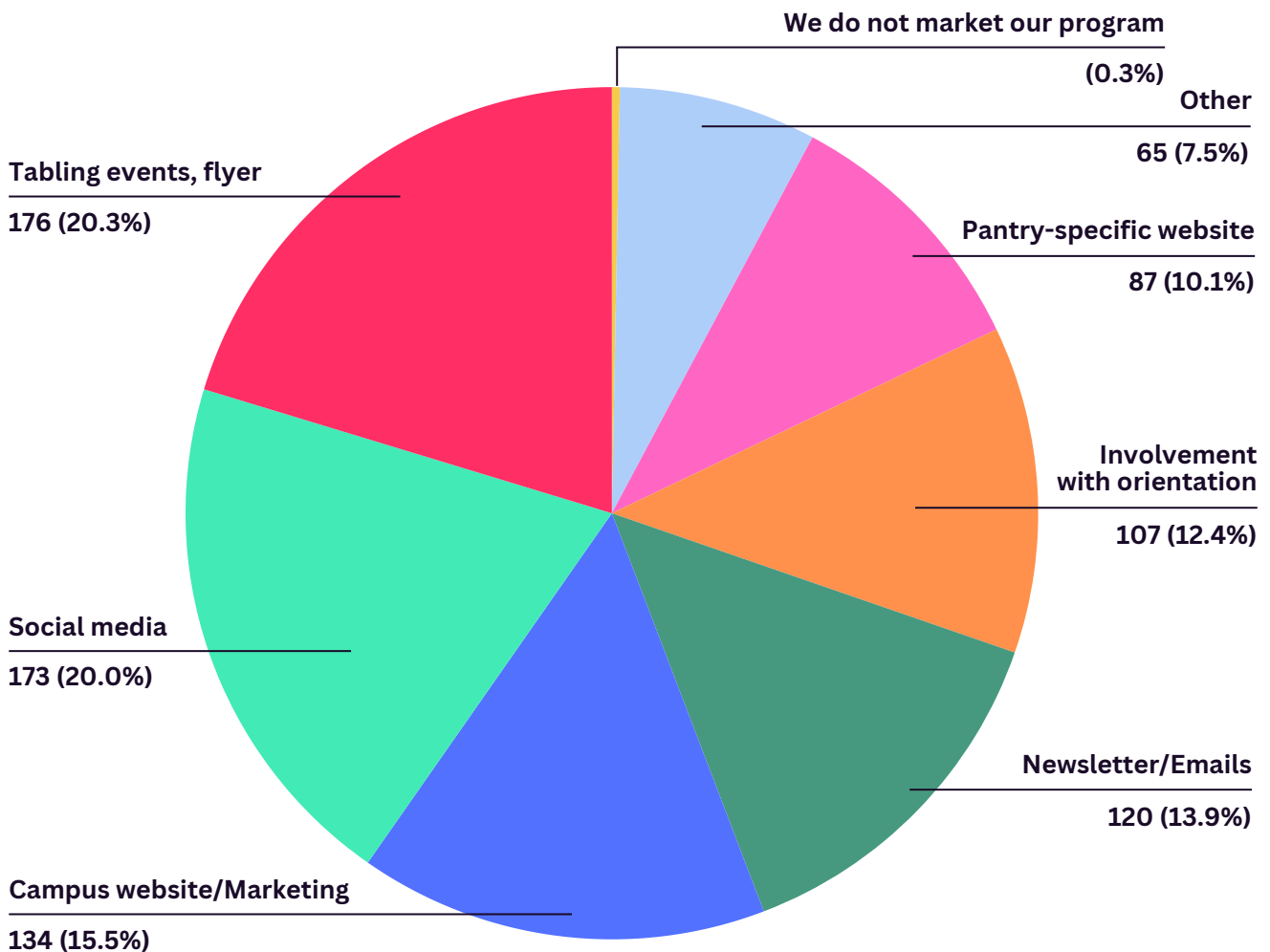
*- Faculty member at the University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh, WI*



## Marketing/Advertisement of Programs and Resources

Effective advertising plays a crucial role in combating stigma and raising awareness of food pantries on college campuses. Common successful advertisement strategies, including tabling events and flyers (49.3%), social media platforms (48.5%), campus websites (37.5%), newsletters/emails (33.6%), and involvement with orientation events (30.0%), serve as effective channels for promoting pantry services. Campuses reach students in a multitude of ways, fostering a supportive campus community where students feel empowered to seek assistance when needed.

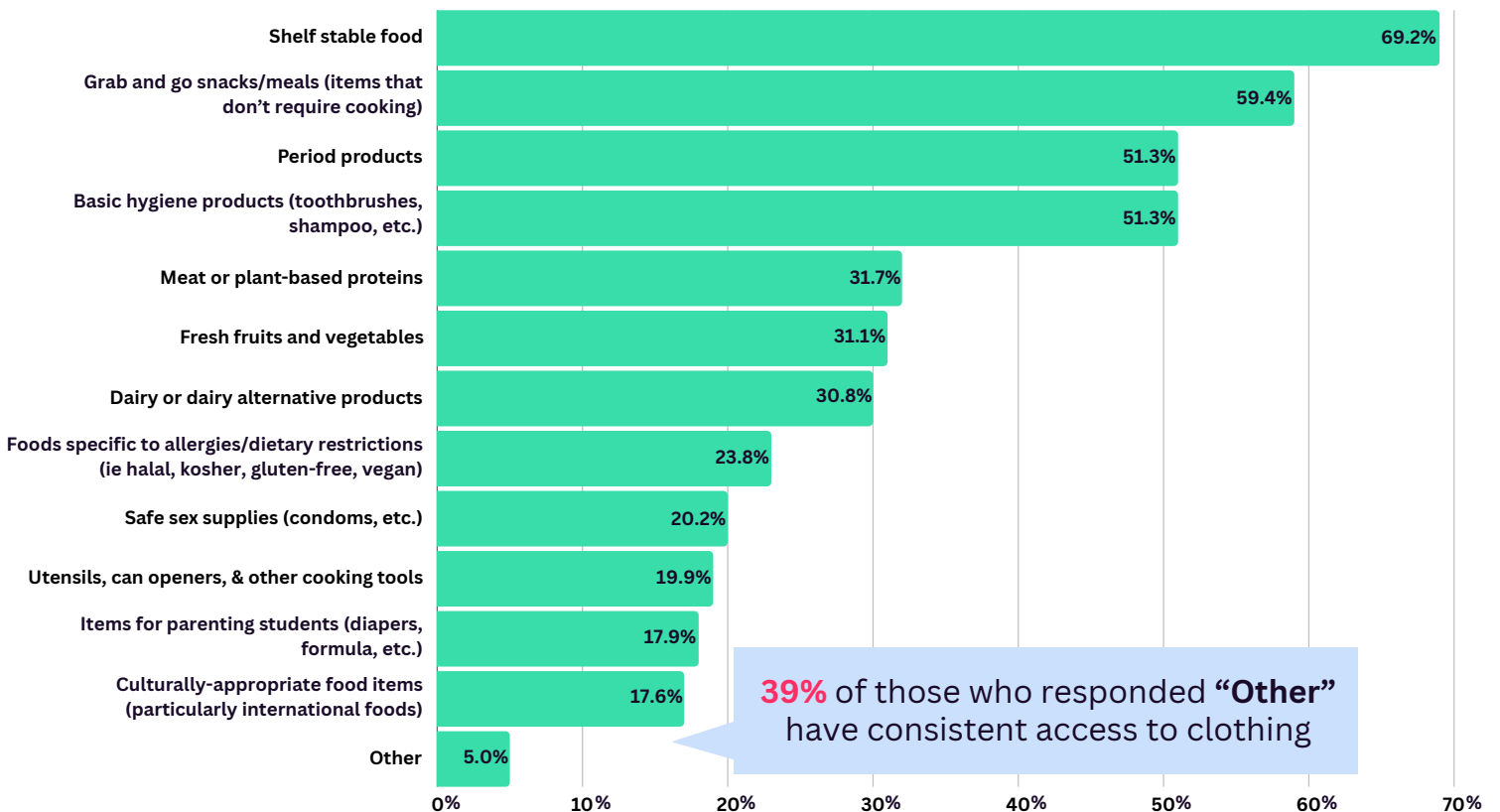
**FIGURE 4.** Marketing/Advertisement Tactics



## Pantry Inventory

Campus food pantries and Basic Needs Hubs prioritize stocking a variety of essential items to address the diverse needs of students. The majority of these facilities offer **shelf-stable food (69.2%)** and **grab-and-go snacks/meals (59.4%)**, ensuring quick and convenient access for students. Moreover, a significant focus is placed on providing **period products (51.3%)** and **basic hygiene products (51.3%)**, recognizing the importance of supporting overall health. Additionally, a noteworthy percentage of pantries offer **meat or plant-based proteins (31.7%)**, **fresh fruits and vegetables (31.1%)**, and **dairy or dairy alternative products (30.8%)**, reflecting a commitment to nutritional diversity. The inclusion of **culturally appropriate food items (17.6%)** and **items for parenting students (17.9%)** further underscores the dedication to addressing specific and varied student needs.

**FIGURE 5. Consistent pantry inventory**



*“The food pantry has **helped me when I needed urgent products such as sanitary products and food to get me through the day and even sometimes the week. I think that it is very appreciated from me and other students around campus that **we have a food pantry to rely on when in times of need.**”***

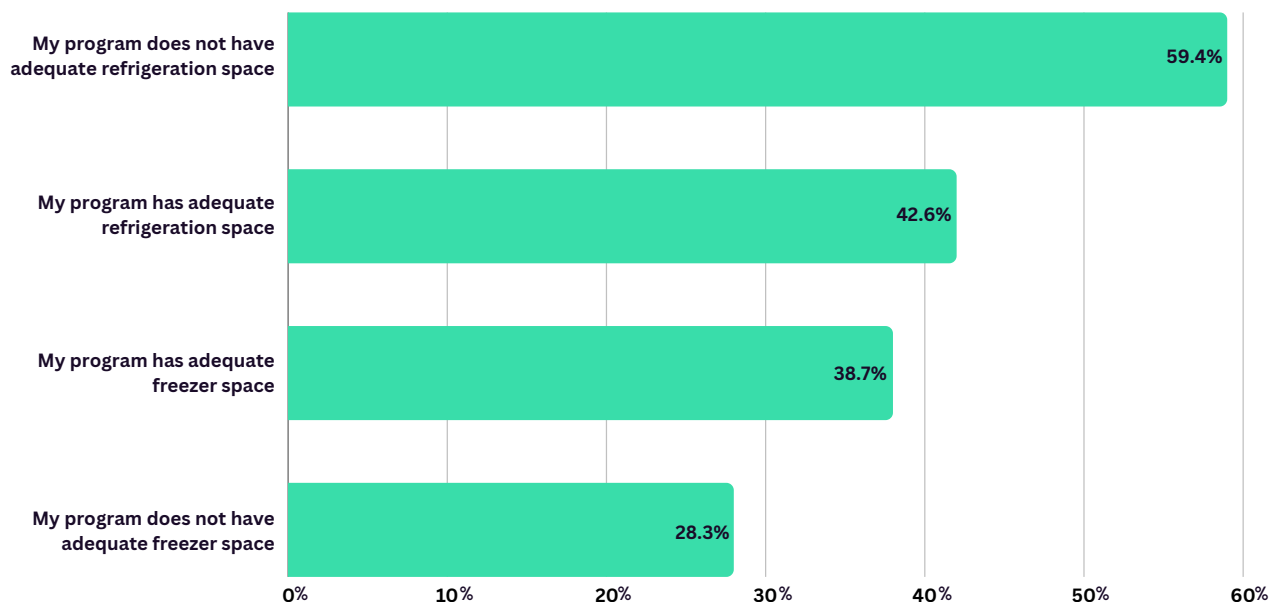
*- Student at Voorhees University, SC*



## Refrigeration

The majority of respondents **lacked adequate capacity for refrigeration (59.4%)** and nearly a third **lacked adequate capacity for freezer space (28.3%)**. This shortage poses logistical hurdles in storing perishable items, likely limiting the variety and quantity of food available to those in need, as shown by the survey data. With limited storage capacity for perishables, programs may struggle to stock these items consistently, leading to lower availability compared to non-perishable alternatives. More campuses offer shelf-stable food (69.2%) and grab-and-go snacks/meals (59.4%), reflecting their practicality in addressing storage limitations. Thus, funding is crucial in mitigating these access limitations by providing resources for infrastructure improvements, such as expanding refrigeration and freezer capacity. The importance of funding will be further discussed in the Biggest Challenges section. Ultimately, increased funding enables programs to better meet the nutritional needs of their students.

**FIGURE 6.** Refrigeration and freezer space

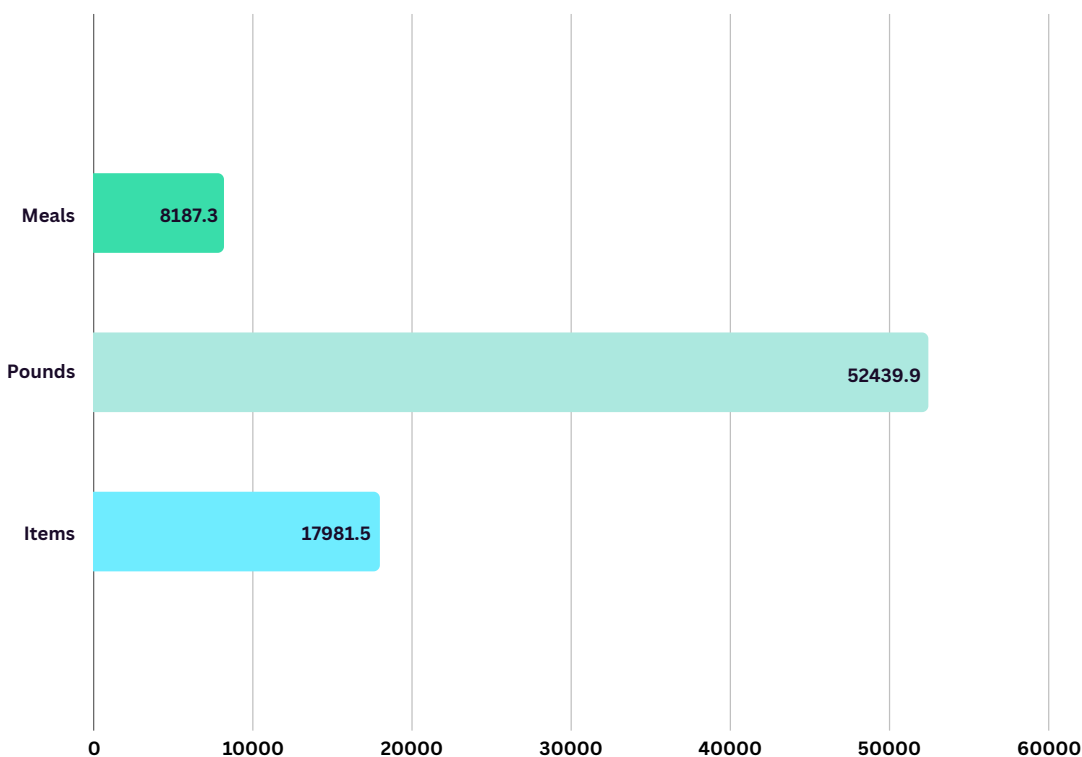


## Distribution

---

Campus pantries displayed varied distribution metrics, with an average estimated distribution of **8,187.3 meals**, **52,439.9 pounds of food**, and **17,981.5 items of food** between August 2022 and June 2023. These far-reaching entities served an average number of **2,260.5 individuals**, with a notable standard deviation of **5,226.8**. The range was remarkably wide, with one respondent reporting a notable maximum of 42,802 individuals. (Note: These numbers do not necessarily reflect unique individuals, but rather the total number of individuals visiting the pantry.)

**FIGURE 7.** Average number of meals, pounds of food, and items distributed by pantries



An average of **81.39 students** received donated meal swipes during the 2022-2023 academic year, with a notable maximum of **1,767 students**. Eligibility requirements for students to receive donated meal swipes, if any, include **filling out an application (40.5%)** or **providing documents/information upon request (25.0%)**. A further qualitative analysis of the steps needed to be taken for students to redeem donated meal swipes included requiring a **student ID card**, **being involved with the campus dining hall**, and **filling out a form**. A quarter of pantries **did not have any eligibility requirements (25.0%)**.

Pantries' meal swipe donation programs were primarily supported by **donated meal swipes from students (77.8%)**, and nearly half of pantries **received donated dollars/meal swipes from their dining provider (47.2%)**. On average, 110 respondents received **118.43 donated meal swipes**, while 38 respondents received an average of **\$419.64 in donations**. In contrast to donations, 106 respondents distributed **\$1,699.76 in meal swipes** and 42 respondents distributed an average of **\$1,936.75 in meal swipes** collected from students or their dining providers during the 2022-2023 academic year.

A limitation of this survey is its inability to differentiate between mutually exclusive donation and distribution sources due to the question structure.

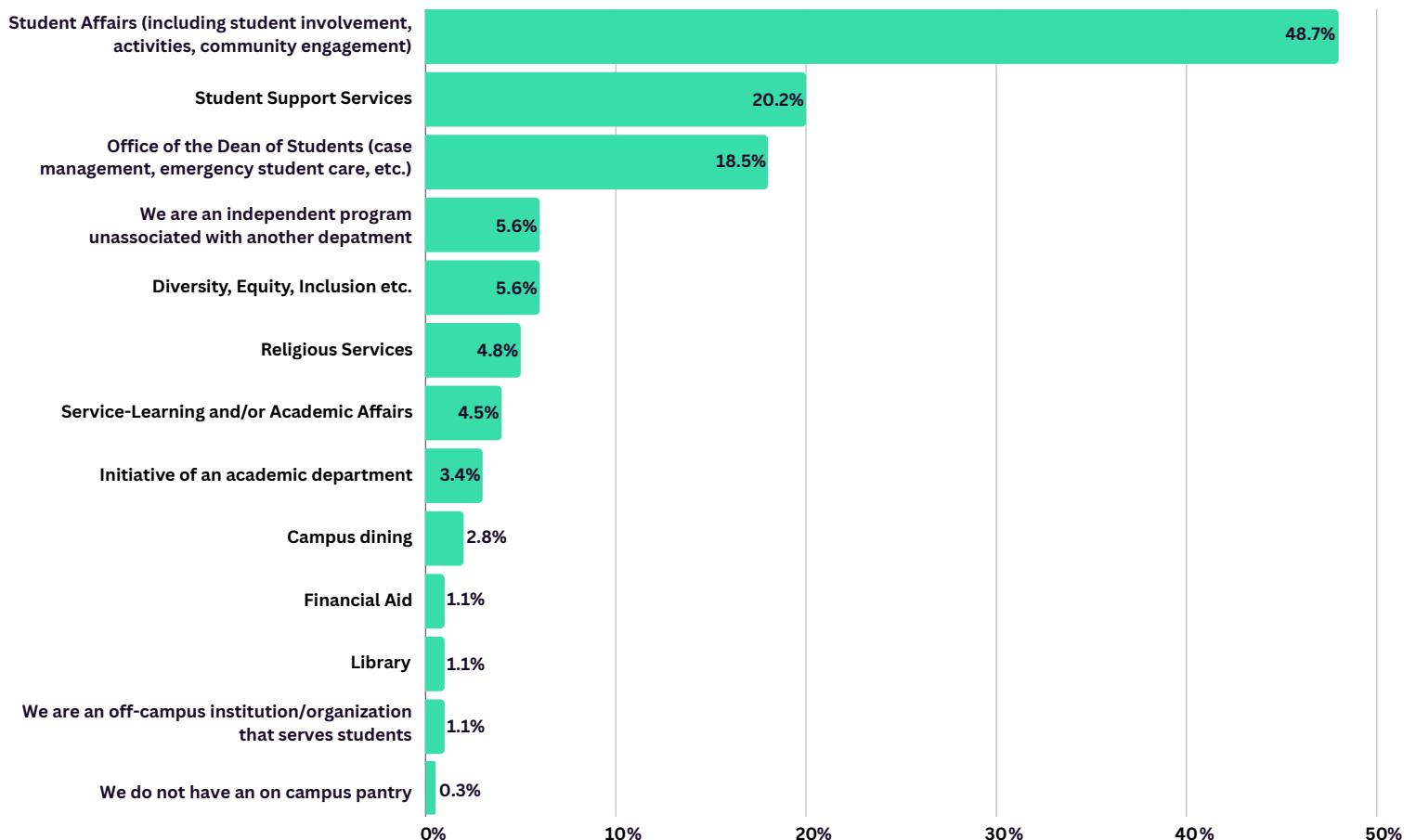


# Campus Engagement and Management

## Organizational Anchors

Food pantries and Basic Needs Hub are housed under various departments and offices. A substantial 48.7% are under the umbrella of Student Affairs, reflecting a commitment to student involvement, activities, and community engagement. An additional 20.2% operate under Student Support Services, while 18.5% are housed within the Office of the Dean of Students. This organizational diversity provides insight into the institutional foundations that house these vital support systems on college and university campuses. It sheds light on the various institutional structures involved in addressing students' needs, ranging from administrative systems like Student Affairs to grassroots initiatives.

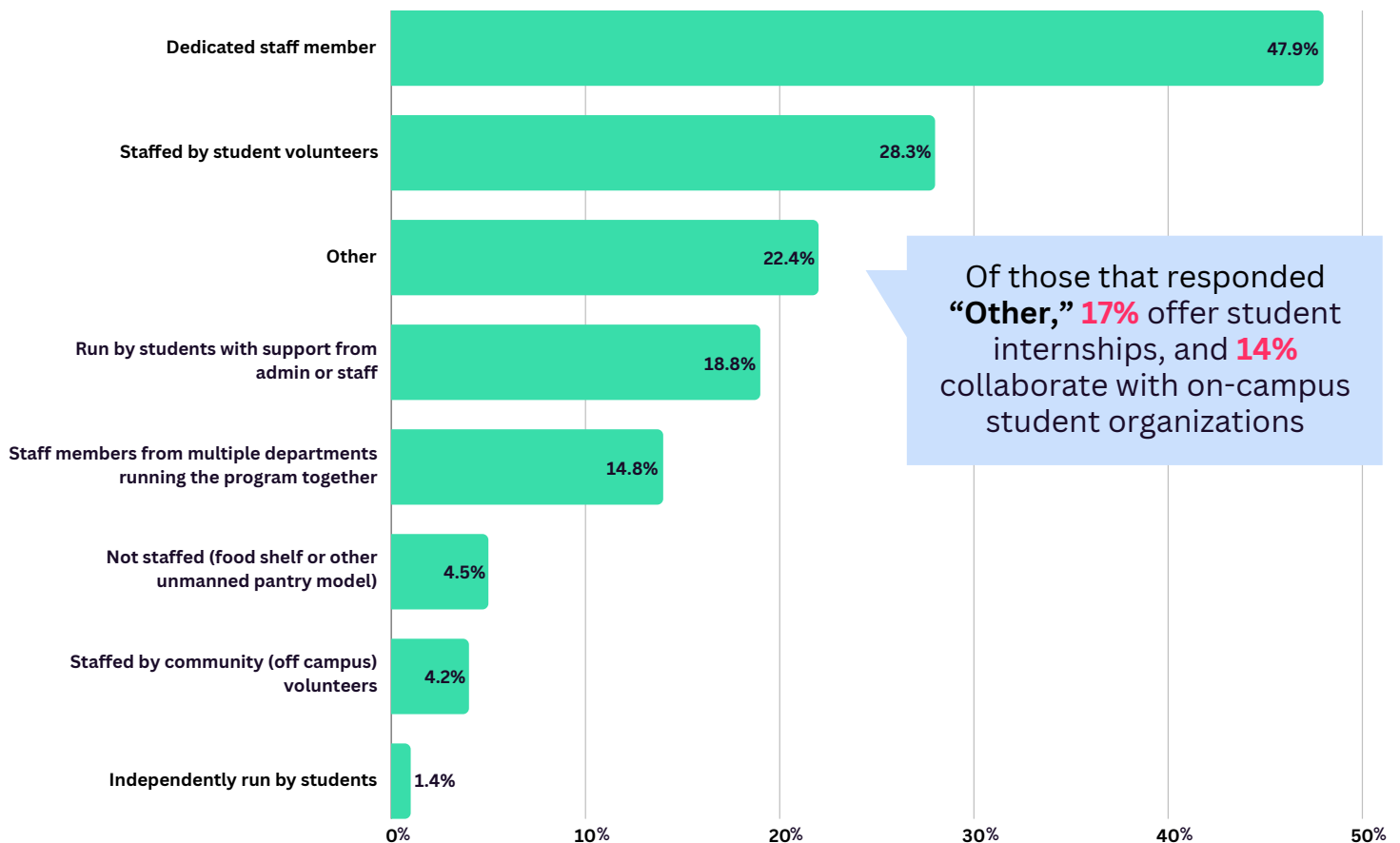
**FIGURE 8.** Departments and Organizational Anchors



# Staffing

Campus leaders also have diverse models of staffing their food pantries. Nearly half of campus pantries are managed by **dedicated staff members (47.9%)**. Staffing models also include student-led initiatives with varying degrees of administrative support: **run by students with support from admin or staff (18.8%)**, **staffed by student volunteers (28.3%)**, and **independently run by students (1.4%)**. The collaborative approach is evident with staff members from **multiple departments jointly running programs (14.8%)**. Notably, a minority operate **without dedicated staffing, utilizing an unmanned pantry model (4.5%)**, while a smaller fraction is staffed by **community volunteers from off-campus (4.2%)**. This variety in staffing structures highlights the adaptability of campuses in tailoring their approaches to best serve their communities.

**FIGURE 9.** Staffing model



## Student Involvement

---

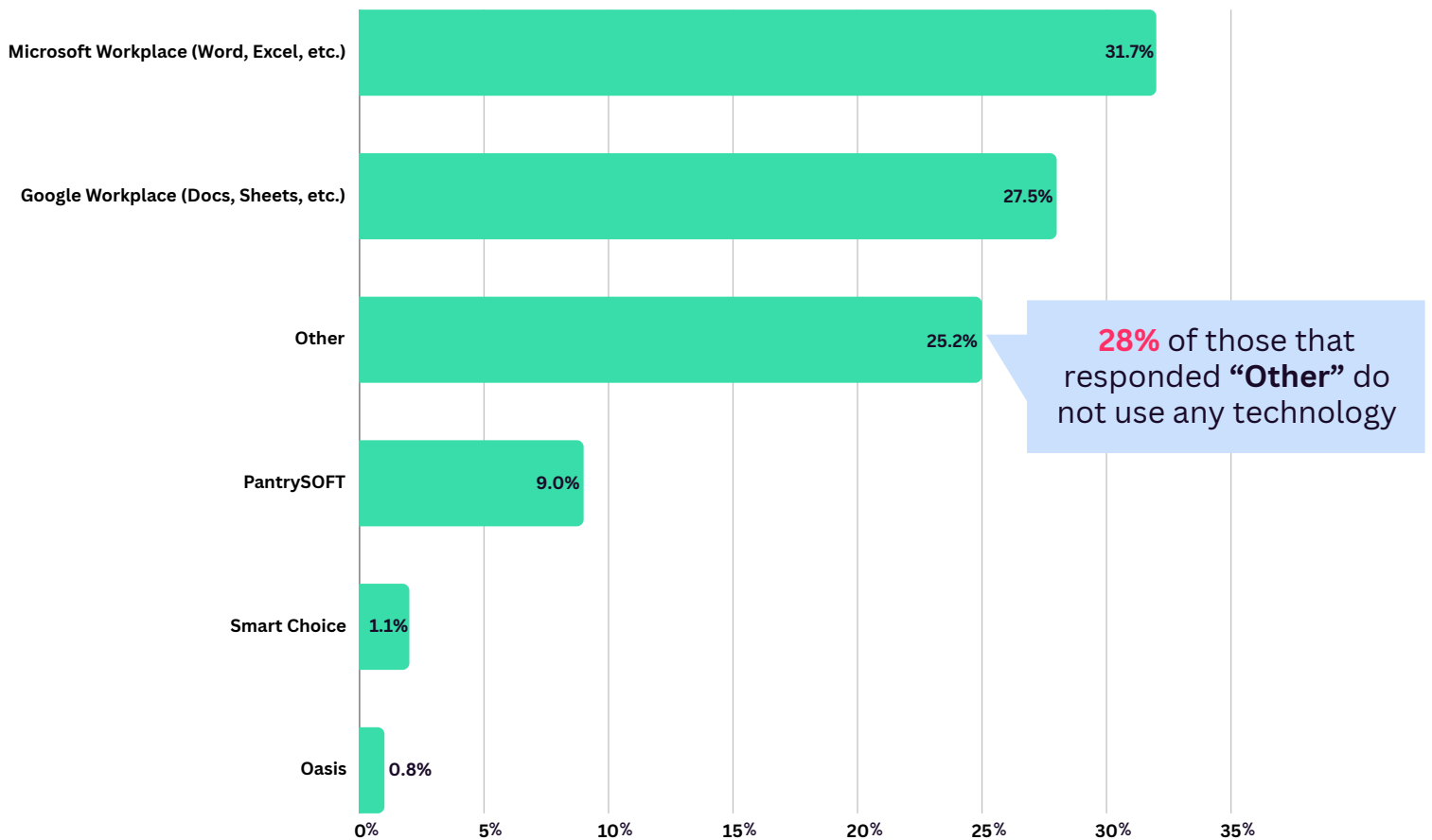
With 28.3% of pantries staffed by student volunteers, students play a pivotal role in running campus food pantries. Over half of the pantries offer **student volunteer opportunities (51.8%)**, while many students also hold **work-study or other paid staff positions (51.3%)**. Additionally, student organizations are involved in pantry operations, with **student leaders actively participating in decision-making processes (16.0%)**. Common barriers preventing student involvement include pantries lacking staff capacity to train and/or fund student workers, as well as students being unaware of the opportunities available to them. This data underscores the substantial contribution of students to pantry management, emphasizing their dedication and leadership in addressing food insecurity on campus, and the importance of reducing barriers to student involvement.



# Technology

Cutting-edge technological solutions have become instrumental in enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of food pantry operations. The top technological programs utilized by pantries include **Microsoft Workplace (31.7%)** and **Google Workplace (27.5%)**. Notably, **1 in 3 pantries** among **Others (25.2%)** did not utilize any digital programs or technology in their tracking and management. The diversity in approaches and resources among pantries highlights the need for tailored support to ensure all can effectively address food insecurity within their communities.

**FIGURE 10. Technology**



# Biggest Challenges and Wins

## Challenges

A look at the internal and systematic challenges unique to college food pantries reveals that the common challenges included funding, staffing/volunteers, meeting students' needs, receiving donations/ sustaining inventory, having a lack of university support, and limited space.

Theme	n of transcript excerpts	Sample quote
Difficulties obtaining and maintaining grant funding	66	“Biggest challenges have been funding limitations. Our pantry utilization has increased tremendously and our usage often exceeds our monthly funding allocation.” - <i>Faculty in Nevada</i>
Issues acquiring donations and sustaining inventory	43	“We saw a significant increase in the total number of visits to the campus pantry and with that maintaining adequate inventory became a challenge.” - <i>Food Pantry Director in Florida</i>
Issues maintaining staff and volunteers	34	“Staffing has been a challenge - increased students on campus has led to us all being busier, hard to keep the pantry open as many hours as we like.” - <i>Dean of Students in Tennessee</i>
Difficulties meeting students’ growing needs	32	“The biggest challenge has been spreading awareness of the program and meeting student needs. Students would like for the pantry to be open longer and more frequently, which we would also like to see.” - <i>Food Pantry Director in California</i>
Limited space	30	“Biggest challenge is we need to expand our physical space to be able to offer more services.” - <i>Faculty in Illinois</i>
Lack of university/ administrative support	21	“Our biggest challenges have been the lack of institutional support/access to institutional resources. We are required to operate almost exclusively on donated resources [...]” - <i>Faculty in Idaho</i>

## Trends in Challenges

Notably, the challenges faced by college food pantries have remained consistent over the past five years, as highlighted in the 2021 and 2023 survey data. The Hope Center administered the first-ever national survey of campus food pantries in 2018 and identified insufficient funding, food inventory, and staffing as the primary challenges.<sup>8</sup> Swipe Out Hunger's surveys in 2021 and 2023 have reinforced these trends, revealing a pattern of struggles in key areas. While the overall challenges remain consistent, there are some subtle shifts in emphasis and magnitude:

### 1. Funding

Funding remains a pervasive issue for food pantries. The 2023 survey revealed that the primary challenge among campus leaders was difficulties in acquiring and sustaining grant funding, a concern that ranked second in the 2021 survey. This suggests that obtaining and maintaining financial resources has become an increasingly pressing concern over the past two years.

### 2. Inventory

In both years, inventory management ranked as the top challenge, with a significant proportion of respondents citing issues such as obtaining donations, maintaining inventory, and ensuring a variety of items in stock. The 2023 survey suggests that difficulties in acquiring donations and sustaining inventory were the second most common challenges among pantries, a shift from its previous top ranking in the 2021 survey.

### 3. Staffing

The challenges related to staffing remained in the number three spot in both the 2023 and 2021 surveys. This consistency indicates the importance of recognizing the need for and prioritizing sufficient and steady staffing levels to support the operation of food pantries on college campuses.

Overall, while the primary challenges faced by college food pantries have remained largely consistent between 2021 and 2023, there are subtle shifts in emphasis, particularly regarding funding and inventory concerns. These trends underscore the need for ongoing efforts to address the structural issues affecting college food pantries, ensuring they can effectively serve students in need within the higher education landscape.

---

8. The Hope Center (2018). Campus food pantries: insights from a national survey. The Hope Center. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED628059.pdf>

## Wins

---

Despite these challenges, there have been notable achievements and wins among campus pantries, serving as encouraging reminders of their dedication to championing student food security. These successes highlight the resilience and innovation of college food pantries, showcasing their ability to adapt and make a meaningful impact in supporting students facing food insecurity on campus.

Theme	n of transcript excerpts	Sample quote
Expanding and growing pantry and services	36	“ Our biggest win is our new refrigerator and freezer so we can offer dairy and meat products to our students.” - <i>Food Pantry Director in Montana</i>
Receiving support from the surrounding community	30	“The biggest challenge has been advertising and finding community support, the biggest win was finding the community support and the willingness of the community to offer help.” - <i>Food Pantry Director in New Mexico</i>
Supporting more students and contributing to community betterment	28	“Knowing we're helping and making a difference.” - <i>Food Pantry Director in Oklahoma</i>
Navigating financial challenges with grants and funding support	26	“With the Swipe Grant we received, we were able to focus on trying to build some sort of stable resources and we got enough momentum this year to be able to be included in our campus Giving Day campaign, and get enough donations (some cash, some in-kind from stores) to get to a point where we have enough resources in reserve for at least 3 months, which gives us breathing room to seek strategic, healthy donations.” - <i>Faculty in Idaho</i>

## Trends in Wins

While the data for wins was not captured in previous surveys, the trends observed in the 2023 survey reflect the noteworthy developments and unwavering efforts of campus leaders in addressing student needs. A notable increase is evident in the types of supportive services offered. There was an **8% increase in SNAP/CalFresh enrollment assistance** and a **14% increase in food scholarships/emergency grants** compared to the 2021 survey data. The advancements underscore the proactive measures taken by campus leaders to expand their support networks. While future surveys may consider capturing wins comprehensively, the observed growth in supportive services signifies a positive trajectory in addressing the evolving needs of students.

So despite the challenges and pandemic-related setbacks captured in previous assessments, this survey revealed that campus leaders displayed remarkable growth and resilience. The wins they've achieved, from securing grants and funding support to expanding services and reaching more students, signify tangible improvements in pantry support systems. These successes underscore the vital role of community partnerships and collective efforts in addressing food insecurity among college students, paving the way for continued progress and impact in the future.

## *The Duality of Challenges and Wins*

---

We discovered a juxtaposition in our evaluation of current challenges and wins, specifically focusing on the following themes:

1. The ongoing challenge of meeting growing demands amid the overarching commitment to supporting students.
2. The contention surrounding the acquisition and utilization of grant funding.

### **Supporting Students: Meeting Their Needs and Making a Difference**

There is a dynamic interplay between the challenge of meeting students' growing needs and the triumph of helping more students and community members. Campus leaders are navigating the increasing number of users while confronting challenges in funding and staffing. Despite these obstacles, campus leaders recognize the significance of supporting students. They recognize that their efforts extend beyond

the provision of food-related services. In response to resource limitations, campus leaders often refer students to other resources on campus or nearby to supplement for shortcomings. This collaborative and holistic approach highlights the interconnected network of support services available to students and campus leaders' commitment to comprehensively meet students' needs.

### **The Funding Dilemma: Struggles and Solutions**

Funding has remained a persistent challenge for pantries and food insecurity programs. However, this survey revealed that pantries that successfully secured grants experienced significant relief from financial strains.

A notable observation from the data is the positive impact of grant funding, particularly the grants from Swipe Out Hunger and Hunger Free Campus legislation. Campus leaders who received support through these grants reported substantial alleviation of financial burdens. Pantries were able to use the additional funds to expand their resources, including obtaining refrigerators and hiring student staff.

While securing grants has provided much-needed relief to some campus leaders, the overall financial landscape remains complex. It is important to recognize that obtaining and maintaining financial resources is a multifaceted issue that requires ongoing effort and support. Moreover, it is crucial to recognize the interconnectedness of funding with other top challenges reported (inventory and staffing). Funding shortages directly impact campus leaders' abilities to maintain adequate pantry inventory levels and secure full-time staff. The ripple effect of funding challenges exacerbates these problems, creating a complex web of operation issues.

As we reflect on the push and pull of funding challenges, we must acknowledge the persistent hurdles in acquiring funding and celebrate the successes of pantries that have secured grants and funding. The survey revealed that the recent expansion of the Swipe Grant Program and passage of Hunger Free Campus legislation has notably contributed to the greater impact observed this year. Continuing to advocate for accessible funding opportunities, in addition to expanding initiatives like the Swipe Grant Program, will better support campus leaders in their mission to address food insecurity within their communities and enhance their impact.

# CONCLUSION

Higher education institutions play a crucial role in combating food insecurity among students, but comprehensive evaluations of campus pantries and programs are often overshadowed by broader research. Swipe Out Hunger recognizes this gap by linking campus partners with data and sharing timely resources to address their challenges.

Campus leaders consistently embrace change, which is evident in their innovative approaches, ongoing developments, and forward-thinking provision of resources and services. At Swipe Out Hunger, growth is more than increasing numbers and metrics. It's about fostering connections with our partners and driving transformative change to inspire impactful outcomes.

The insights from this survey shed light on avenues for advocacy, resource allocation, and tailored research methodologies. Swipe Out Hunger remains committed to advocating for policies and legislation that provide funding to colleges, such as the Hunger Free Campus Bill.

In addition to our policy work, the initiatives at Swipe Out Hunger that address the most common campus food pantry challenges include, but are not limited to:

- **Funding:** Launched in Fall 2021, the campus pantry grant fund (Swipe Grants) has facilitated \$870,500 to date, awarded directly to campuses in support of their student food security work.
- **Referrals:** Swipe Out Hunger secured partnerships with companies that can provide free or discounted pantry management software, refrigeration and freezer solutions, hygiene products, and beyond to campuses in its free-to-join network.
- **Connections:** Building a peer-to-peer network and facilitating the exchange of information and ideas between campus partners and students.

Any individual interested in taking action to start or expand a pantry or basic needs hub can visit [swipehunger.org](https://swipehunger.org). Swipe Out Hunger offers in-person convenings and online resources at no cost to more than **750 campuses in its national network** and is eager to support your efforts!

# NOTABLE QUOTES

*“Students are thankful they have a place to go when they need food on campus. They also know we are a place to provide them with different resources on campus and in the community.”*

*- Food Pantry Director in Pennsylvania*



*“Since we started our food pantry, reported **food insecurity has decreased** and **the number of students served has increased significantly**. We recently became a choice pantry and **our students have reacted very positively to the change.**”*

*- Faculty in Ohio*