

**Student Hunger at UBC Point Grey Campus**  
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**University of British Columbia**  
**LFS 450**  
**April 10, 2016**

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UBC Social Ecological Economic Development Studies (SEEDS) Sustainability  
Program  
Student Research Report

**Student Hunger at UBC Point Grey Campus**

**Helen Garbiec, Wenbo Liang, Katelyn Ling and Cassandra Ly**

**University of British Columbia**

**LFS 450 - Land, Food & Community III**

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## Executive Summary

Increasing reliance on food banks in Canada is a direct result of inadequate social assistance programs and dramatic increases in tuition and living costs for students across Canada (Abbott et al. 2015). This phenomenon can be observed at the University of British Columbia Point Grey campus where the AMS Food Bank has seen a 100% increase in usage within the past two semesters (Robinson 2015). The goals of this project were to highlight the value and benefits that food banks can bring to its users and produce a manual of recommendations and practices for the AMS Food Bank. We assessed the current strengths and gaps with the service, conducted interviews with the coordinator and volunteers, obtained data on users, strategies and operations from the AMS Food Bank, a literature review and other Canadian campus and city food banks. This allowed us to draw on similarities and compare differences in order to formulate the most effective, meaningful, and accessible recommendations. There were over 1000 visits, both new and returning, to the AMS Food Bank between September 2014- November 2015; Graduate students and international students appear particularly vulnerable and are main clients of the AMS food bank. Donations are varied but uneven in their nutritious value. Staff is dedicated and appreciate the opportunity of helping others. Our recommendations include advocacy for mentorship for coordinators, additional training for staff and volunteers, formulating a vision and mission, planning events and workshops that build a resilient and sustainable community and establishing partnerships with other food banks to ensure a reliable and constant supply of donations.

## Introduction

Food insecurity is a growing issue across Canada as more and more people are experiencing high living costs and struggling to make ends meet. One particular group that is often overlooked are post-secondary students whom are becoming one of the largest groups of food bank users (Meal Exchange 2012). Across the country, students have noted the financial difficulty of meeting their daily needs, including accessing sufficient amounts of healthy food. Here at UBC, the AMS Food Bank has seen a 100% increase in usage in the past two semesters (Robinson 2015). Issues on hunger are rarely discussed openly as being hungry is the subject of stigma; yet these issues require transparent, accessible, and meaningful discussions to be overcome. As a result, it is important to assess and further understand the extent of student hunger on the UBC campus and the factors that contribute to this phenomenon.

Ensuring food security is very much a part of any strong and resilient food system, especially here at UBC, a campus that prides itself on leading innovative sustainability initiatives. When looking at the realm of social sustainability, affordability continues to be one of the biggest barriers for students to access university studies. Tuition rates have continued to increase dramatically every year. In current dollars, BC students were estimated to pay 35% more for their tuition (\$5,637) than their counterparts in 1992 (\$1,982) (Canadian Federation Students 2013). In addition, with Vancouver being the world's third-least affordable city, the financial circumstances of students are made even more severe (Marr 2016). According to UBC's Cost Calculator, a Domestic Undergraduate Student in the Faculty of Land and Food Systems living off-campus could potentially pay up to \$19,000 for living costs, personal expenses, and

tuition fees during their first year of school; international students could face fees up to \$46,338.04. Inevitably, some students will eventually be forced to make compromises on their food, particularly nutrient-dense foods, to simply make ends meet.

The first university food bank in Alberta opened in 1997 and by 2005, there were 51 food banks on Canadian campuses (Alberta Centre for Active Living 2007).

Nowadays, almost all Canadian post-secondary institutions have a food bank available for students (Meal Exchange 2012). Besides UBC, other Vancouver campus food banks have also seen an increased demand including the one at Simon Fraser University which issued 2598 emergency grocery vouchers since 2013 (Robinson 2015).

Increased usage can be attributed to high tuition fees, high rents, growing living costs, increased food prices, and job shortages (Gordon 2011).

BC students currently graduating with bachelor's degrees have the third highest debts in the country (Robinson 2015). The University of Guelph's food bank supported more than 500 dependents (children and spouses) since May 2015 (Guelph Student Food Bank 2016). This speaks to the common misconception that people who attend post-graduate institutions can afford to feed themselves adequately. There is a lack of academic and community research on the topic, making it even more difficult to efficiently gauge the severity of student hunger on campuses across Canada. Campus food banks are operated by busy students and have a high turnover of volunteer staff. Statistical records are not a priority and as a result, quantifying the use of food banks on- or off-campus by students is challenging.

The goal of this project was to learn about UBC's own food bank and to create a manual, titled Student Hunger at UBC Vancouver, for its management staff and

volunteers which will include practical recommendations to increase efficiency in daily operations, reduce stigma associated with the use of the service, increase dialogue on food security, health, and social equity and, provide learning opportunities (Appendix C). To create this manual, we needed to understand the strengths of the AMS Food Bank to capitalize on its achievements and identify the gaps to provide recommendations that would support the work of staff and volunteers. By conducting this research, we also hoped to create partnerships with external stakeholders to maintain a high volume of food at the Food Bank and create accessible and sustainable solutions to create a food secure campus.

## Methodology

### *Statistics*

We gained access to some sections of the AMS Food Bank's database with the help of Jay Singh, coordinator of the AMS Food Bank. The database contained statistics regarding the number of visits and customer demographic information since the opening of the food bank. We conducted a literature review for statistics where we selected articles related to the AMS Food Bank and other Canadian food banks. Key words used to search for relevant publications included, "food banks", "hunger reports" and "Canada". Literature published within the last 5 years was deemed most desirable. However, it was challenging to find appropriate literature for campus food banks most likely due to the degree of confidentiality associated with these statistics.

### *Interviews*

We conducted one-on-one interviews with Jay Singh, the AMS Food Bank coordinator, and group interviews with two AMS Food Bank volunteers. We spent some time observing how the volunteers and the coordinator interacted with clients and with each other and examining donations. We contacted, through phone and email seven Canadian food banks including the Greater Vancouver Food Bank, food banks in major suburbs of Toronto and Vancouver (North York, Ontario and Richmond, B.C.) and on campuses at Memorial U., U. of Calgary, Saint Mary's U. and Dalhousie U. to identify and compare significant strategies that may be implemented at the AMS Food Bank. City food banks were chosen to evaluate the possibility for collaborations with the AMS Food Bank and gain useful suggestions since they have been operating for longer



periods of time than campus food banks. The Greater Vancouver Food Bank, which serves the Vancouver area including UBC, did not respond. For this reason, the Richmond Food Bank which is a very established food bank in a major suburb of Vancouver was used as a comparable alternative and potential collaborator.

We used a series of open-ended questions to communicate with food bank staff and volunteers to obtain unique and in-depth reflections about their vision for the future, the training process, the management and organization of donations and their accomplishments and challenges (Appendices A1 and A2). We also asked additional questions depending on how the conversations unfolded and using information from other stakeholders during the data collection process.

## Results

### *About the Food Bank*

Located at the University of British Columbia Vancouver Campus, on unceded Coast Salish Territories, the AMS Food Bank first opened in 2006. As a non-profit organization, they aim to provide food relief to students who may be experiencing food insecurity. As a result, the Food Bank offers a wide selection of non-perishable food items and recently, more fresh produce and goods. Other household products, such as baby formula and hygiene supplies, are also made available for students to take. The Food Bank is currently requesting for more food donations that are rich in carbohydrates and proteins, such as canned beans, canned fish and meats, canned vegetables, pasta, and oatmeal.



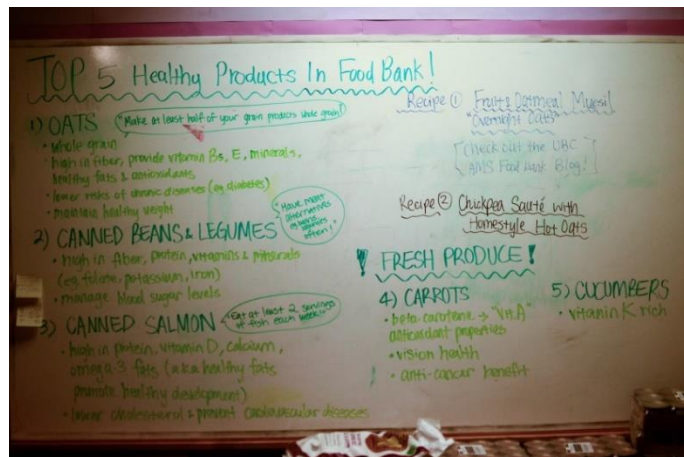
The AMS Food Bank is located in the old Student on the UBC Point Grey campus.

The food bank is led by a ten-member executive team and supported by part-time volunteers present during the opening hours. The Executive Team is comprised of Jay Singh who is the Food Bank Coordinator, Associate Coordinator, Client Relation Managers, Events and Marketing Coordinator, Inventory Control Coordinator, Sponsorship Officer, Volunteer Coordinator, Marketing/Outreach Advisors, and Special Events Volunteer Crew. Together, they offer opening hours three days a week, on Mondays and Tuesday from 12-4 and Wednesdays from 1-3 or by appointment when students are available to drop by the Food Bank. The AMS Food Bank office is located in the AMS Nest 3107J and the food bank itself is located in room 42U in the lower level of the old Student Union Building. To access the service, UBC Students merely have to show a valid student ID card and answer a short, confidential questionnaire upon arrival. In addition, the organization strives to create a friendly, welcoming, and accessible environment for all visitors. A bulletin board can be found in the Food Bank providing information to visitors on what products are available and nutrition-related resources. Students are able to visit the Food Bank 6 times per semester and receive one full bag

of groceries; students with other family members are eligible to receive two bags. This recommendation is to ensure that there is sufficient inventory for new and returning students throughout the semester. Food Bank coordinators and volunteers will not turn away anyone who requires additional support. They are open to providing referrals to students to other social services off campus if these particular limits are not meeting their needs.



Entrance to the AMS Food Bank.



Bulletin board with nutrition-related resources for clients.

The AMS Food Bank receives donations from the community, including student groups, campus partners, and businesses, such as London Drugs and Save-On-Foods. Shelves are also stocked with food products from Costco and other grocers with generous monetary donations from the community. Food bank coordinators and volunteers often make trips out to these food outlets in order to keep their shelves stocked for students. However, in the near future, this process will be made easier after successful conversations with the AMS Purchasing Office, the entity that purchases food for all of AMS' food businesses and services. The Food Bank will eventually be able to make food purchases through the office at a bulk price.

The organization is now in its 10th year of operation and is striving to alleviate food insecurity by providing more fresh produce and goods for students. The Food Bank is also hoping to raise more awareness about its presence as an emergency service that is accessible to everyone.

### *Clients*

Enrollment takes place at the food bank where a brief questionnaire is presented to a first-time client who fills in the information on an iPad. We could not obtain details of this questionnaire. However, we were told by Singh that the questions were aimed at establishing the individual's financial and living status. The number of new student clients at the AMS Food Bank between 2014 to 2015 accounts for 19% of the total client base since its opening in 2006 (Fig. 1). A grand total of 1180 visits at the AMS Food Bank took place between September 2014 and November 2015. The number of student visits to the AMS food bank increases at the end of the term (November and March) as

students have most likely used up their funds (Fig 2).

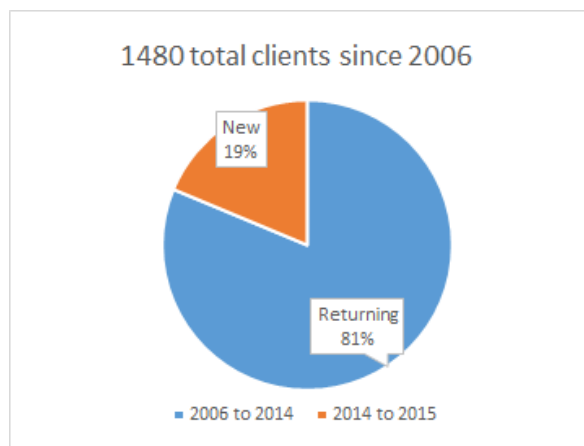


Fig. 1 Total number of clients at AMS Food Bank since 2006

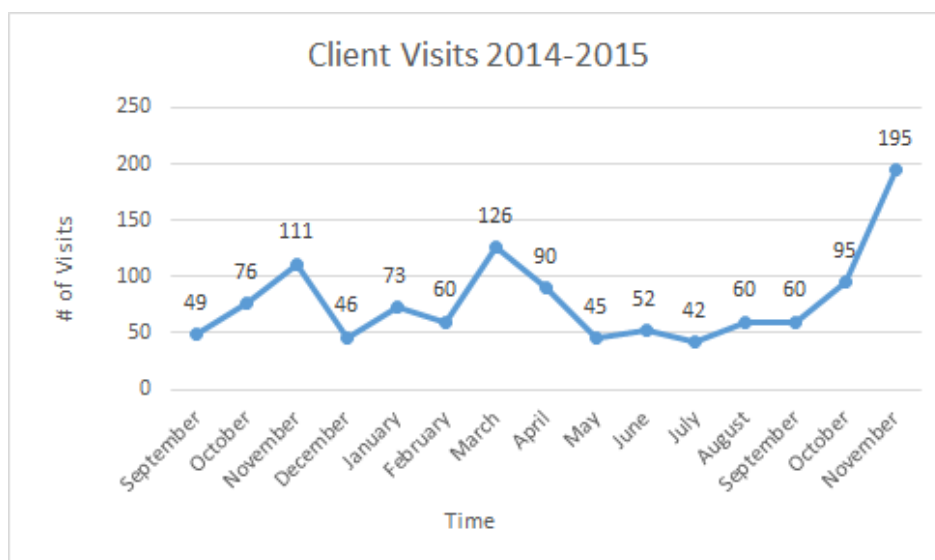


Fig. 2. Client Visits at the AMS Food Bank from September 2014 to November 2015.

The majority of clients that visited the AMS Food Bank in 2014-2015 live off-campus (Fig. 3). The cost of monthly rent for students is lowest for on-campus residence (UBC 2016), slightly higher for off-campus residents in the Lower Mainland (Province of British Columbia 2016) and highest for private rentals on campus which on

average costs as much as \$1487.50 which is equivalent to the total monthly amount of a student loan (Government of Canada 2016). When comparing these costs with the amount of a student Loan a low-income family would be provided with, we can see that it is not enough to sufficiently sustain any of these housing expenses (Fig. 4).

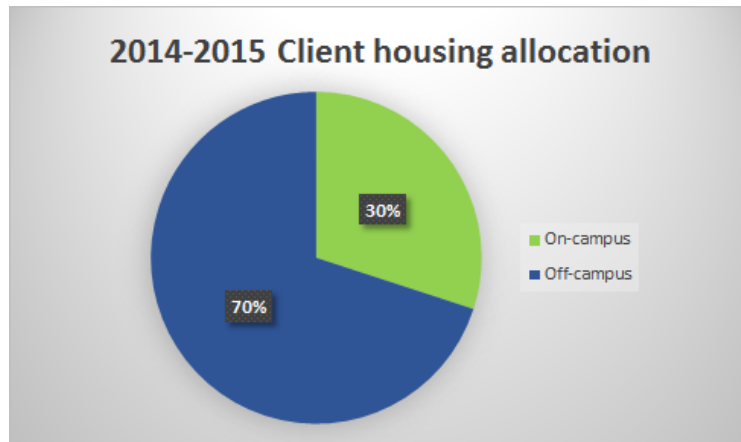


Fig. 3. Housing status of of AMS Food Bank clients during the 2014-2015 school year.

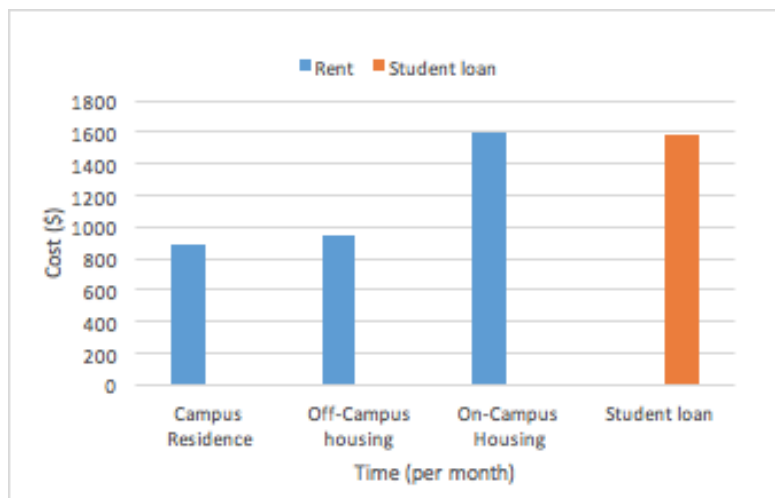


Fig. 4 Housing cost for UBC student relative to average student loan in Canada.

The total cost of living per month in Vancouver for a student far surpasses the average student loan provided by the government for a low-income family in Canada (Fig. 5).

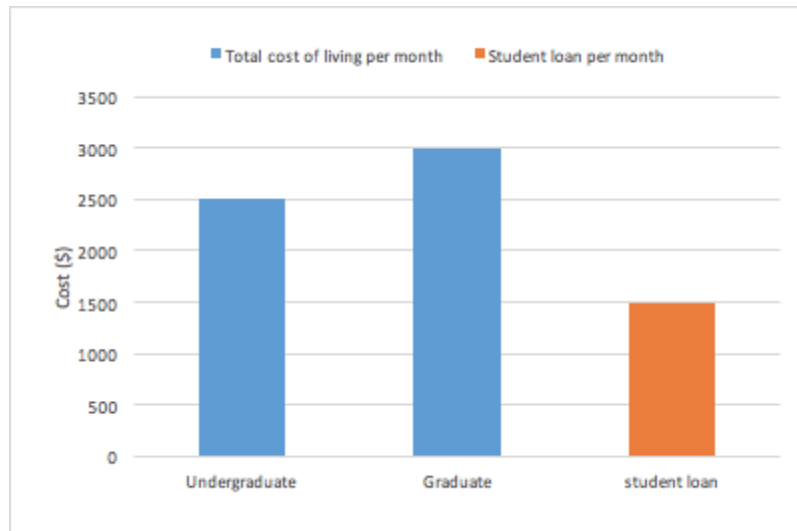


Fig. 5. Total cost of living per month for undergraduate and graduate students at UBC and average student loan in Canada.

Graduate students and international students are overrepresented in AMS Food Bank's client base. Graduate Students account for 19% of the total student population at UBC, yet they represent 38% of the Food Bank's clientele (Fig. 6). While international students account for 21.4% of the total student population at UBC, they make up 47% of the total number of clients that access the AMS Food Bank (Fig. 7). International undergraduate and graduate students face higher tuition costs per month relative to domestic students (Fig. 8). AMS Food bank supported dependents in addition to students during the 2014 to 2015 school year (Fig. 9).

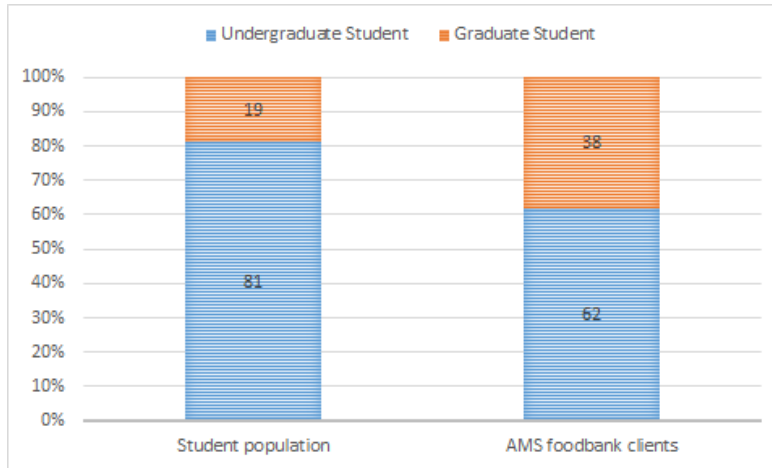


Fig. 6 The proportion of undergraduate (blue) and graduate (orange) students who visited the AMS Food Bank during the 2014 to 2015 school year.

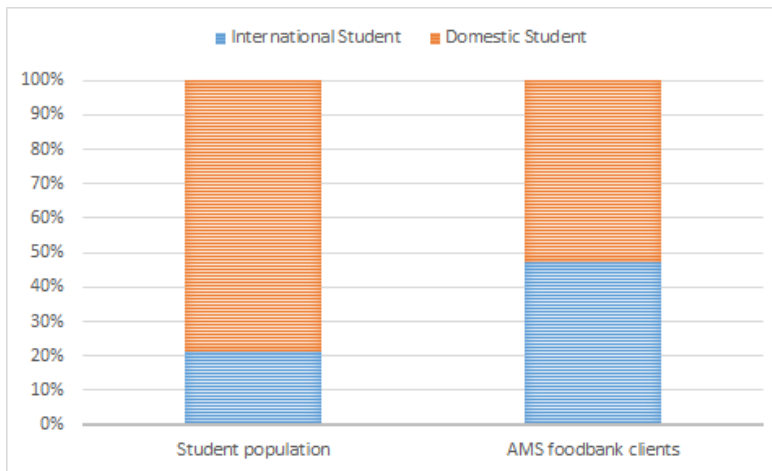


Fig. 7 The proportion of domestic (blue) and international students (orange) who visited the AMS Food Bank in 2014 to 2015 school year.

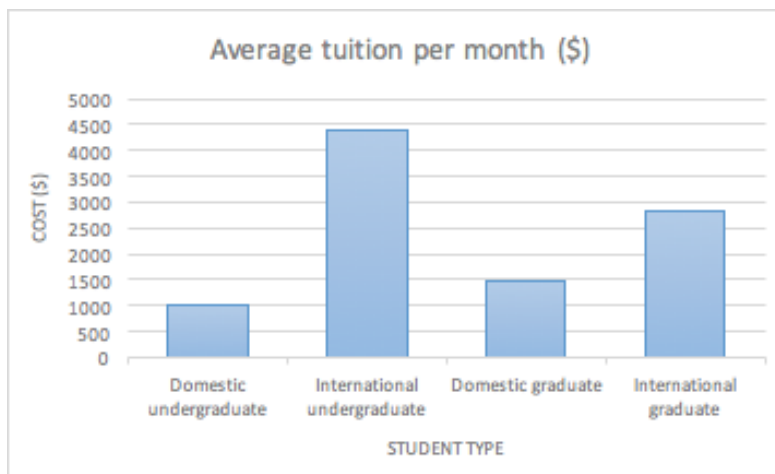


Fig. 8 Average tuition cost for different categories of UBC students.



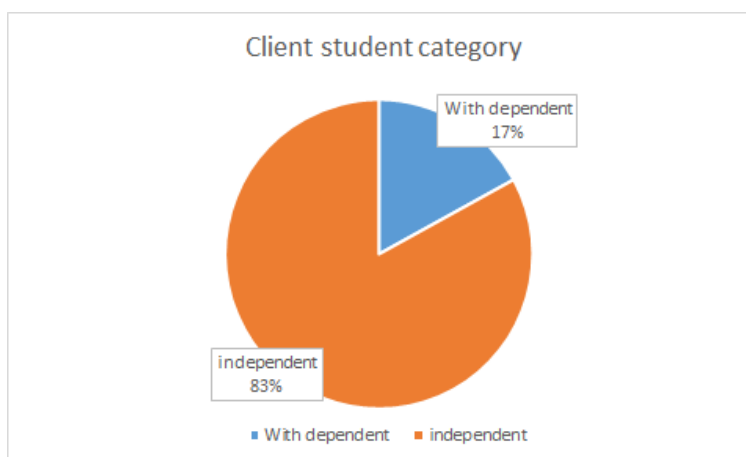


Fig. 9 Proportion of AMS Food Bank clients supporting dependents

### *Operations of AMS and other Food Bank*

The volunteers and coordinator expressed similar sentiments where they ideally hope to see reduced usage, however more realistically they highlighted the desire to match and forecast client needs. With regards to their purpose, they want to be known solely as an "emergency food bank", targeting those who truly do not have the financial capacity to get food. Lastly, they want the campus to be more conscious of the presence of hunger at UBC.

The coordinators do not appear to get training prior to taking on their yearly position. However, Singh noted that volunteers receive practical training such as the Food Safe program, composting/recycling and interaction with clients.

Donations are coming from individuals who drop-off goods at the food bank and pick-ups at grocery stores such as Safeway at variable times throughout the year. Items that are donated include not only food, but toys, cosmetics and hygiene products (razors, pads, diapers). A list of desirable items is available on the AMS Food Bank website and large donors are notified of preferences by the coordinator. It is important to note that storage is limited at the food bank and has resulted in a limited number of

perishable goods and a decreased variety of food items. The AMS Food Bank currently has one fridge, one chest freezer, and seven shelving units.



Chest freezer, shelving units and fridge at the AMS Food Bank.

We found many common issues when we compared the AMS Food Bank to other food banks. Helping others was an overarching mission for all the food banks. Limited storage was a common problem. Collaborations with external organizations was a recurring recommendation. Food banks at Dalhousie U. and Saint Mary's U. experienced improved quality and consistency of food supply as a result of a partnership. For example, the food bank at Dalhousie U. partnered up with Feed Nova Scotia which is a registered charitable organization that is also a member of Food Banks Canada. They aim to provide food to those in need and reduce that need (FeedNS 2016).

## Discussion

### *Clients*

The quantitative data provided by the AMS Food Bank reveal that some students at University of British Columbia are definitely facing an increasing challenge of food insecurity. The average student loan is insufficient for current high housing prices, let alone tuition costs. UBC's Vancouver campus residence is the most affordable and convenient for the average student (Fig. 4). However, the availability of this sort of living arrangement is limited as only first-year students are guaranteed a place in residence. Other undergraduate students must win a lottery to obtain a place in a residence and graduate students face long wait lists. The university residences can only host about 9400 students each year (UBC, 2015) including a large proportion allocated to first year students. Accordingly, the majority of clients who experience food insecurity are living off campus (Fig. 3). Nevertheless, living on an average student loan means living on a budget of \$1487.50/month as calculated from the Federal government student loan estimator. It can be very hard to get by with the cheapest rents for UBC students at roughly \$900 along with \$800 in other living expenses as calculated through the cost of living calculator provided by Province of British Columbia. This does not include the cost of tuition into the equation which is expected to grow by 13% in the next four years (The Canadian Press, 2014). Graduate student and International student overrepresented in AMS food bank client base. The reasons for this overrepresentation are unclear, but it could be due to higher tuition costs when compared to the fees of domestic undergraduate students. They receive no additional student loans or financial assistance from the government or UBC, making them far more susceptible to food

insecurity if they are not or only partially supported by a research grant, fellowship or academic department. We also suspect that students with dependents may also be at risk in experiencing food insecurity. However, we do not have enough data to confirm that this group is overrepresented in the AMS Food Bank.

### *AMS Food Bank Operations*

The information provided by the coordinator, Jay Singh, and two volunteers was very consistent. Both coordinator and volunteers voiced concern around the mission of the AMS Food Bank and how it may be misinterpreted by students. While they promote the AMS Food Bank as fundamentally an "emergency food bank" to be used in exceptional circumstances, they feel that some students use it as a source of free food they can access six times in the semester. This difference in vision has proven to be a long-standing challenge and may result in the re-evaluation of the screening process for new clients and the number of visits allowed per user.

Both coordinator and volunteers highlighted the positive and welcoming atmosphere at the food bank. They took pride in their student-run initiative which has created a very special community in a small location at the old Student Union Building. Singh, the coordinator, specifically expressed his satisfaction with the promotion of the food bank and how it has become visible on campus. The increased number of donations appeared to be the main indicator for this accomplishment.

Coordinator and volunteers have a distinct vision for the future as they all emphasized the ability to meet the growing needs of their clients. The coordinator also mentioned improvement in the ability to forecast user demands, showing concern for the food bank to be proactive in optimizing donations with demand. No particular

timeline or project was mentioned to realize this vision. We have attributed the absence of a scheduled plan to the short twelve month long positions that each coordinator holds and the constant need to attend to daily operations which include managing donations, maintaining opening hours, educating volunteers and reporting to AMS staff.

Furthermore, volunteers commit varying amounts of hours throughout the school year depending on their own availability. As a result, it is difficult for the AMS Food Bank to carry forth long-term plans since it is not staffed for implementation of new projects.

Coordinators work on a part-time basis for a year. Since the AMS Food Bank opened in 2006, there has been at least ten people that have held this position. However, there is no formal training given to the new coordinator prior to taking on his/her role as food bank coordinator and there is no transition during which an ending coordinator works side by side with an incoming coordinator. Jay Singh, the current coordinator, explained that his past experience running his own business was definitely an asset for him when he first took on his position at the Food Bank. He had the skill set to professionally manage volunteers and engage with multiple stakeholders. As a result, all the volunteers we talked to respected him as leader and role model at the AMS Food Bank. However, Singh admitted that he was unfamiliar with the issue of food insecurity and unaware of how prevalent it was on campus. Singh also noted that volunteer training is just as valuable, if not more so, given their frequent interactions with clients. Volunteers were able to articulate the specific training received in the form of workshops which are facilitated by the coordinator. Topics that were covered included food safety, composting, recycling and appropriate manners and demeanor for the food bank context.

The coordinator provides a list of desirable items to donor organizations to emphasize the collection of certain desirable products that are either high in demand or difficult to acquire. However based on our observations, some of the products found at the food appropriate or in line with their philosophy of being a strictly emergency food bank. During emergency situations, it is essential to provide nutrient dense foods, thus making it especially important to screen types of donations or to educate the donors. The presence of products such as toys, cosmetics, cocktail powder mixes are inconsistent with the vision as an emergency food bank and may in fact attract the kind of clientele the food bank does not want to target. However, we recognize the benefit of having toys or even hygiene products and the difficulty of refusing such donations when knowing some students struggle financially.

#### *Other Canadian Campus Food Banks*

Upon analyzing the data collected from food banks at the University of Calgary, Saint Mary's U. and Dalhousie U., we found common challenges and successes. We also found some useful information on space, stigma and collaboration with external partners which could be of use to the AMS Food Bank. A common challenge amongst all the food banks was the lack of space they had to store their food. The amount of space at all establishments seems to be a significant limiting factor preventing growth or ability to help those in need.

Engaging in conversations related to the social stigma associated with food banks was also a common problem. It is challenging for people to share personal financial constraints and avoid judgement from others. The food banks shared a variety of approaches to mitigate the issue. Some of these strategies included participating in

multiple media platforms to create discussion outside the food bank, thus creating a dialogue among food banks users and ensuring a safe space to host these kinds of conversations.

Some food banks have benefited from establishing strong relationship with external partners. These food banks provided more than food by directing clients to community resources external to the food bank for extra support. These resources can range from education on managing your finances to cooking tips to stretch your meals; all contribute to community food security. The campus food bank at Dalhousie U. and Saint Mary's U. have formed a partnership and are collaborating with a charitable organization known as Feed Nova Scotia. These two campus food banks have expressed less concern in maintaining a constant supply of food relative to other food banks because of the consistent food deliveries due to these partnerships.

### **Recommendations for the AMS & AMS Food Bank**

#### *Action*

1. Formulate vision and mission statements and action plan to be revisited periodically.

We suggest that the UBC AMS provides resources for the AMS Food Bank to formulate a clear vision, mission statement, and concise action plan which could be reviewed periodically. Developing such statements would help set priorities for coordinators who would be responsible for implementing relevant programs and projects. Moreover, we recommend defining clearly the term “emergency food bank” for the UBC Vancouver campus context since the AMS Food Bank defines itself as such and consequently needs to target the appropriate student population.

## 2. Training programs

We recommend developing a training program specifically for the coordinator because they currently have minimal training opportunities prior to the start of their contract. One suggestion would be to extend coordinator contracts from 12 month to 13 month contracts. As an example, coordinators hired for 13 month contracts could start in January and finish their contracts in February. In this way, the following coordinator would have a month of training with the previous coordinator. Such a system would provide support for the new coordinator, ensure training, and promote consistency in values and work ethic. Given the longer contract of the coordinator position, the food bank would require additional financial support from the AMS and UBC, which would ultimately act as an investment in the food bank and its success. In addition, contextual training aimed at exploring food insecurity issues and challenges associated with food banks operation would be beneficial to coordinators.

## 3. Implement a variety of educational opportunities

The food bank could act as an educator, providing opportunities for nutrition education to their clientele. More education and information could be provided on the use of certain products. For instance, infant formula is one of the many products the food bank offers. However, little signage or information exists at the food bank on when formula should be administered or under what circumstances. This is a significant concern because the World Health Organization and Health Canada recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of an infant's life in order to achieve health benefits (Weeks, 2012). In contrast, only 14% of Canadian mothers exclusively breastfeed for six months (Weeks, 2012). As noted by Jean Kouba, president of the



Canadian Lactation Consultant Association, this is mainly due to the fact that mothers do not receive sufficient guidance on proper methods of breastfeeding from the health-care system (Weeks, 2012). AMS food bank volunteers and Singh also acknowledged that they were not well-informed in this field, but recognized its importance and showed a desire to learn more about it. In this way, we recommend the food bank provide more education on their food products and factors that may impact student hunger. Additional signage on certain products, such as infant formula, may be useful to provide information which can aid clientele to make informed choices that are best suited for their circumstance. As an example, we created a sample poster for the food bank, explaining the significance of breastfeeding in comparison to using infant formula (Appendix B). Another possibility would include the development of community dinners for clientele, each with varying educational themes such as food safety, easy nutrient-dense recipes, or financial budgeting. This would help build capacity within the community while engaging in concerns or factors impacting student hunger. Although the food bank does not possess a kitchen, the food bank can build partnerships with other student-run organizations on campus that are passionate about enhancing food security and accessibility on campus, such as Agora Cafe and Sprouts. Agora Cafe is found in the MacMillan building and strives towards sustainability and food security (<https://blogs.ubc.ca/agora/>). Sprouts is a student-run organization which aims to provide healthy, sustainable, and affordable foods on campus (<http://www.ubcsprouts.ca/>).

#### 4. Screening donations

We recommend screening donations based on nutrition criteria. We recognize that turning away donations can be challenging and must be done in a sensitive manner to educate rather than discourage donors. However, screening donations would ensure that donations are nutrient dense and relevant to a clientele that requires emergency relief. To do so, food bank staff could speak with each donor before accepting the donation, since staff already record donor information when they drop off donations at the food bank in person. A conversation with the donor would provide an opportunity for staff to highlight the importance of nutritious donations while explaining the drawbacks and consequences of innutritious ones. Furthermore, the food bank can emphasize the importance of monetary donations which allow the food bank to control what foods can be purchased based on need and use its buying power since three dollars' worth of food can be purchased for one dollar (Jay Singh, personal communication). Additionally, it may be beneficial to redirect donors to the Christmas Bureau or the Greater Vancouver Food Bank which accept a larger scope of donations to serve varying purposes.

#### 5. Research

Further research on assessing the nutrition of the food products available at the food bank would provide valuable information on which nutrients are readily available or lacking in the foods available on the shelves. This information could help guide clients' choices and food bank staff's orders at stores or requests for donations to ensure the foods available at the food bank provide complete or adequate nutrition.

It would also be valuable for the food bank to further analyze their quantitative data. Although we had data on the number of undergraduate and graduate users as well as

domestic and international users, we did not have access to the information combined, such as the number of users that are undergraduate and domestic. As well, it would be useful to develop information on the breakdown of users per faculty. These statistics would be useful to further understand the demographic of the clientele and how best to cater towards their needs and reach them.

Moreover, it may be beneficial to look into developing a credit system for the distribution of food for clientele based on level of susceptibility. This way, clientele that are more susceptible or vulnerable would be able to receive a higher amount of food credits. This credit system has worked well at the Good Food Centre, a campus food bank at Ryerson University. Specifically, food bank users are setup on a credit system where they receive on average 10 credits per week to collect food; this is approximately a three-day supply of non-perishable food items and fresh produce. If users are supporting dependents, such as children or siblings, they can receive five additional credits per dependent (Crisp, 2015). This food bank was able to ensure that its users are receiving adequate quantities and qualities of food by developing the credit system.

## 6. Developing Partnerships

Since the AMS Food Bank has not made these connections, it might be beneficial to them to register as a partner organization with the Greater Vancouver Food Bank given the number of visits has steadily been increasing since they opened and especially within the past year. Contacting the Greater Vancouver Food Bank can be done through their website <https://www.foodbank.bc.ca/contact-us/>.

## 7. Improved nutrition signage.

The coordinator and volunteers were open to our suggestion of implementing nutrition signage to inform clients about the value of food items. In addition to providing basic information to clients, such signage may trigger an re-evaluation of items on offering in terms of benefits or disadvantages associated with each of them. All in all, the idea of implementing these signs was well-received due to the potential benefits for clients.

### Recommendations for the provincial government

Given that the AMS Food Bank is an organization that exists in the context of Vancouver, British Columbia, it is affected by provincial social and economic policies. We believe its existence is due at least in part, by the mismatch between living expenses and the average budget of a student on loans. While the AMS Food Bank is currently doing the best it can to mitigate student hunger, food banks across Canada continue to be a Band-Aid solution to the systemic problem of food insecurity. National statistics also indicate that for every one person that uses the food bank, another three people that require additional support do not access the food bank (CTV News, 2011). As noted by Elaine Power, an associate professor at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, "it seems that food banks have thrown up this smoke screen that leads the rest of us to believe that the problem is being taken care of" (CTV News, 2011). It is crucial that the provincial government recognizes the severity, complexity, and intersectionality of food insecurity that currently exists and addresses the necessary steps to alleviate it. It is in the best interest of all that students who commit to higher education studies have the opportunity to reach their fullest potential and become productive members in society in a timely manner.

## Limitations

We greatly appreciate the contributions and input from the AMS Food Bank and all other stakeholders. Inevitably, our group was limited by several factors which has shaped the methodology, data collection and analysis, as well as the final deliverable. We were not able to access the answers to the survey questions that the food bank uses to determine the demographic and contextual information of each user, limiting our assessment of the demographic or contextual data of the clientele. For privacy reasons, we were could not conduct interviews with the food bank clientele. Therefore, we could not receive direct feedback from users.

## Conclusion

The AMS Food Bank has done a fantastic job of meeting the needs of their clientele and trying to enhance the service to new and returning users of the food bank. They have managed to increase capacity along with the growing demand. At the same time, there is room for improvement, such as creating a clear vision and long term goals, identifying strategies to create partnerships, improve training and education and screen donations. However, it is important to recognize that the food bank will need additional support from the UBC community and external stakeholders to act upon our recommendations. We hope that our AMS Food Bank Manual prompts more support and funding for the AMS Food Bank, and acts as an avenue to contribute to the field of research on student food insecurity.

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## Appendices

### **A1 - Interview questions for Jay and volunteers:**

- What is the donation process like?
- How are donations allocated? Emphasis on what products?
- What type of training were you given prior to working/volunteering at the Food Bank?
- From your experience working/volunteering here, what is your vision for the AMS Food Bank in the next yr, 2yrs, 5yrs, 10yrs?
- What the biggest strengths of the AMS Food Bank? What are some of the challenges?
- What policy changes do you think need to take place in order to address some of the challenges the Food Bank is facing and food insecurity as a whole?
  - What other organizations besides UBC administration should be involved in this process?
- What are the greatest impacts you've seen thus far that the AMS Food Bank has brought since you started working/volunteering here?
- What have you learned volunteering/working at the Food Bank?
- With regards to products, like infant formula, are those taking these products aware of how to prepare it/how and when it should be administered? Since breastfeeding is usually the best option?



**A2 - Interview questions for Canadian food banks (city and campus):**

- Is the food bank engaged with research or community organizing to look at student hunger on campus?
- Are there any current collaborations between the city food bank and campus food banks?
- Do you have any recommendations for students who are interested in starting up a food bank at their own universities? What do you think are the first steps?
- How does the food bank organize and manage their donations? What are the biggest challenges (e.g. Too much or too less of certain products, etc.)?
- How does the food bank engage in conversations about "stigma?"
- What are the major successes and challenges of the food bank?

### A3 - Information provided by campus and city food banks across Canada

	<b>University of Calgary</b>	<b>Saint Marie's University (Halifax)</b>
Collaborations with city food banks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No collaboration with Calgary Food Bank</li> <li>• Donate items to salvation army</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a collaboration with city Food Bank</li> <li>• Took 9 months, easy but long application process</li> <li>• City Food Bank delivers once every 2 weeks</li> </ul>
Recommendations for campus food bank start up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a supportive and dedicated team</li> <li>• Strong presence on social media, advertising on campus, encourage volunteers to engage in discussions with the campus community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure there is space; a location a little out of the way (more discreet)</li> <li>• Collaboration with already existing food drives, where food can be redirected to the Food Bank</li> <li>• Funding available (ie. Departments)</li> </ul>
Organize/Manage donations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biggest challenges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Donations are organized by type and date of expiry</li> <li>• Advertise more heavily on items that are low in stock</li> <li>• Create a "Most Needed Items List" on the website and during events (list reflected on every year)</li> <li>• Challenges: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Surplus in specific items</li> <li>○ Lack of storage space</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With regards to food drives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Having other groups run the food drives takes the pressure off of the Food Bank</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Engagement in conversations about "stigma"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of a safe space</li> <li>• Validate client's experience</li> <li>• Engage with public during fundraising events</li> <li>• Operate within a confidential, judgement-free zone</li> <li>• Ensure only one person at a time when a client is</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having ample discussions</li> <li>• Asking professors if they can take to their classes</li> <li>• Campus/city newspapers</li> </ul>

	using food bank services	
Major success and challenges	<p>Successes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help the campus community in need</li> </ul> <p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognition or "being known"</li> <li>• Unaware of location on campus</li> <li>• Barrier of stigma</li> </ul>	<p>Successes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in Food Bank use</li> <li>• Seeing less students coming for financial aid</li> </ul> <p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social stigma</li> <li>• Students don't have as much as people think</li> <li>• Different expectations: hours of operation</li> <li>• Targeting specific demographics</li> <li>• Publicize what they have to offer</li> </ul>
Additional Comments		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping statistics - "powerful tool"</li> <li>• Safety training</li> <li>• Being consistent</li> <li>• Volunteers working regular shifts</li> <li>• Clients access once a week</li> </ul>
	<b>Dalhousie (Halifax)</b>	<b>Richmond Food Bank</b>
Collaborations with city food banks	<p>Work with FeedNS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They provide all the food, with exception to donations from the community or fundraisers</li> <li>• Register with FeedNS annually as a member agency (\$75/year)</li> <li>• Deliver food each week</li> <li>• Clients complete paperwork for FeedNS and sign in weekly</li> <li>• Sign-in sheets/client forms are submitted monthly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No Collaborations with campus food banks</li> <li>• Establish connection by calling in and setting up a meeting</li> </ul>
Recommendations for campus food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider what space you have to use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Starting point: establish a need</li> </ul>

<p>bank start up</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Securing a location that is accessible to students, maintained and capable of storing food is a key first step.</li> <li>• Where will your food supply come from</li> <li>• Partnering with w provincial or local organization is very helpful. IN our case they have a ton of resources to share with us including training, materials, posters, etc. Is your source sustainable?</li> <li>• Do you plan to prebag food for clients or let them bag their own? Do you have guidelines for users in mind?</li> <li>• Who will run the food bank? Paid staff, volunteers?</li> <li>• How will you promote the service to your students</li> <li>• How often will it be open?</li> </ul>	<p>Ask 2 questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any services?</li> <li>• Are people connecting to these services?</li> <li>• If the answer is yes to both of these questions then there is an area of opportunity</li> </ul>
<p>Organize/Manage donations · Biggest challenges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Order delivered on Thursdays</li> <li>• Volunteers unpack and stock items right away</li> <li>• Make sure to group similar items on the same shelf <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Getting a variety from other shelves</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of storage space</li> <li>• Maintaining limits per shelf are challenging for users</li> <li>• Fresh produce going bad (disinterest of discoloured fruit)</li> <li>• Surplus in certain items</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monday to Friday pick-ups</li> <li>• List of organizations are created in advance</li> <li>• Food drives from these organizations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Ex. Safeway</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Sorted by categories, then given out to clients</li> <li>• Fresh produce are bought from a wholesaler</li> </ul> <p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surplus in bread/baked goods</li> </ul>

	<p>that are hard to move off the shelves</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not a lot of fresh produce, dairy, etc.</li> </ul>	
Engagement in conversations about “stigma”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the student Food Bank itself</li> <li>• Train staff to be welcoming to users</li> <li>• Being open a lot (Mon-Sat) throughout the week</li> <li>• Having a lot of volunteers</li> <li>• Noted that they should be doing more tabling and talking with students about the issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attending community meetings, and developing partners within organizations</li> </ul>
Major success and challenges	<p>Successes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helping those in need</li> </ul> <p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteers missing shifts</li> <li>• Inconsistent hours of operation</li> <li>• Users taking advantage of passive volunteers, thus taking more than they should</li> <li>• Fast emptying of shelves</li> <li>• Recycling material taking up a lot of space</li> </ul>	<p>Successes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helping the community</li> <li>• Providing help to other organizations that are helping those who are food insecure</li> </ul> <p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outreach</li> </ul>
Additional Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full time staff member at the student union who oversees the Food Bank</li> <li>• Student executives are heavily involved in determining the direction of services</li> <li>• Student volunteer organizes volunteer team (sends emails, makes the schedules, starts new volunteers) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ This student gets a \$500 honorarium each semester</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing food to other organizations/programs (ex. Community kitchens) to reach those who are food insecure</li> <li>• Documentation is key for the transfer for work</li> <li>• Training sessions</li> <li>• More permanent positions</li> <li>• Building relationships with other Food Banks</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12-20 volunteers who sit at the Food Bank for 1-3hr shifts each week</li> </ul>	
	<b>North York Harvest Food Bank (Toronto)</b>	
Collaborations with campus food banks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support York University – Keele and Glendon Campus’ and Seneca College</li> </ul>	
Recommendations for campus food bank start up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedicated space (private intake, waiting rooms, fresh and dry storage)</li> <li>• Dedicated volunteers</li> <li>• Someone dedicated to the administration of the program</li> <li>• Tracking food bank visits</li> <li>• Identify umbrella food bank (Richmond of Greater Vancouver Food Bank?) – member agency</li> <li>• Ability to fundraise or food-raise</li> </ul>	
Organize/Manage donations · Biggest challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Storage (important to house food donations)</li> <li>• Culturally inappropriate foods</li> <li>• Tell donors what items are desirable or encourage monetary donations</li> <li>• Understand different between “best before dates” and “expiration date”</li> </ul>	
Engagement in conversations about “stigma”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcoming space</li> <li>• Training volunteers to be sensitive or “employ” volunteers who use the program</li> <li>• Allow people to vent frustrations about the</li> </ul>	

	<p>program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate empathy</li> <li>• Consult those who use the service regularly – include in decision making</li> </ul>	
Major success and challenges	<p>Successes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People coming together</li> <li>• Opportunity for engagement/discussion around challenging the status quo</li> <li>• Clients getting food they wouldn't have had otherwise</li> <li>• People are connected to other resources, services and programs</li> </ul> <p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Band-aid, stop-gap solution</li> <li>• Very institutionalized with little support =&gt; little capacity to offer good programming</li> </ul>	
Additional Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to support new and existing food banks</li> <li>• New food banks need to have a lot of thought go into them</li> <li>• Combine them with anti-poverty advocacy efforts</li> </ul>	

	<b>AMS Food Bank Coordinator (Jay Singh)</b>	<b>AMS Food Bank Volunteers</b>
Vision for the Food Bank in the next 1yr,3yrs, 5yrs, 10yrs...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideal: won't be a need for a Food Bank <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Reduced usage</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Matching client demands and forecasting their needs</li> <li>• Reaching out to those who are truly in need of food</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform/promote the presence of hunger in a modern establishment</li> <li>• Meet the need of the users</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasis on being an "emergency" Food Bank <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Focus less on being campus-wide</li> <li>◦ More focused</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
Successes and Challenges	]Successes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating a good culture and environment</li> <li>• Increased awareness</li> </ul> Challenges: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintaining a level of food</li> <li>• Question of having stricter screening or limiting number of visits</li> </ul>	Successes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having a good environment/community</li> <li>• "Family of volunteers"</li> </ul> Challenges: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting those who need food to the Food Bank</li> <li>• Element of shock – experiencing first-hand what hunger might look like</li> <li>• Have others understand that the Food Bank is specifically an "emergency? Food Bank"</li> </ul>
Policy changes? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What other organizations should be involved?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Screening process (more in-depth)</li> </ul> Note: confidentiality challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who should be involved?</li> <li>• AMS services, head/executives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having flat rates for meals (buffet style/eating room areas)</li> <li>• Incentivizing the consumption of healthier food options</li> </ul>
Greatest Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing a great culture/environment that is welcoming which in turn diminishes stigma</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helping people, easing others troubles</li> <li>• Not seeing people who have utilized their services, thus freeing up opportunities for others</li> </ul>
What have you learned?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implications of certain products being available to clients</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being more open-minded</li> </ul>
Signage? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ex. Infant formula</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should be learning more about the products they are providing and their implications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Useful</li> </ul>
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not much training prior to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting the right</li> </ul>



	<p>working</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilized past experiences</li> <li>• More important for volunteers</li> </ul>	<p>community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disposing/composting</li> <li>• FoodSafe</li> </ul>
Donations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accept most donations (especially from individuals)</li> <li>• List of desirable items are made known in advance</li> <li>• Emphasis on carbs/proteins/nutritious foods anyone would want to eat</li> <li>• Organizations who may be potential donors are "screened" prior to accepting any donations to evaluate self-interests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stocking and organizing donations</li> </ul>


## B - Sample breastfeeding poster

# BREAST IS BEST

Breast milk is the best food for your baby! It's the only food or drink your baby needs for the first 6 months of life

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## BENEFITS

- Nutritious & contains antibodies
- Promote jaw development & tooth alignment
- Skin to skin contact = increase oxytocin = happiness boost 
- Saves you money!


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## MYTH VS FACT

<p><b>Myth:</b> Women do not produce enough milk</p>	<p><b>Fact:</b> Women generally produce more than enough milk</p>
<p><b>Myth:</b> Formula is the same as breast milk</p>	<p><b>Fact:</b> Formula is not the same as breast milk: it does not contain antibodies or enzymes</p>

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### BREASTFEEDING IS NOT RECOMMENDED WHEN...



Infants have rare metabolic conditions

Mothers are HIV+

Mothers or infants have severe illnesses

If concerned, please refer to your family physician

Brought to you by the AMS Food Bank

**C – AMS Food Bank Manual**

Given the length of the manual, it can be found on a separate document.

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# Student Hunger at UBC Vancouver

A Report Prepared for the AMS Food Bank - APRIL 2016

Compiled by: Helen Garbiec, Katelyn Ling, Wenbo Liang & Cassandra Ly  
LFS 450 - Land, Food & Community III

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# About the AMS Food Bank

Located at the University of British Columbia Vancouver Campus, on unceded Coast Salish Territories, the AMS Food Bank first opened in 2006. As a non-profit organization, they aim to provide food relief to students who may be experiencing food insecurity. As a result, the Food Bank offers a wide selection of non-perishable food items and recently, more fresh produce and goods. Other household products, such as baby formula and hygiene supplies, are also made available for students to take. The Food Bank is currently requesting for more food donations that are rich in carbohydrates and proteins, such as canned beans, canned fish and meats, canned vegetables, pasta, and oatmeal.

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# Introduction

The first university food bank opened in Canada back in 1991 in response to growing issues of student hunger on campus; by 2007, the number grew to 51 (Alberta Centre for Active Living 2007). Some studies have suggested that this increasing reliance on food banks and its programs is a direct result of inadequate social assistance programs and dramatic increases in tuition and living costs for students across Canada (Abbott et al. 2015). This phenomenon can be observed here locally at UBC where the AMS Food Bank has seen a 100 percent increase in usage within the past two semesters (Robinson 2015).

This data along with other statistics provided by the Food Bank served to be a valuable resource as we conducted our project. Several campuses such as the University of Toronto and the University of Alberta have begun to conduct research and publish results on campus hunger to gradually fill the gap for the lack of research on this particular topic. Hence, our goals for this project were not only to produce a manual of recommendations and practices for the AMS Food Bank, but also to highlight the value and benefits that food banks can bring to the campus community when student food insecurity continues to prevail.

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In order to achieve these goals, we attempted to address some of the internal challenges identified by both the coordinator, Jay Singh, the 2015-2016 Food Bank coordinator and some volunteers. In the short term, our aim was to come up with practical and adaptable strategies that volunteers at the food bank can adopt. We were present at the food bank to assess the current strengths and gaps with the service, conducted qualitative data by interviewing the coordinator and volunteers, and obtained quantitative data from both the Food Bank and our own literature review on other hunger reports. We were also able to connect with several other Canadian campus and city food banks to get a better sense of what strategies they employ at their own organizations. This allowed us to draw on similarities and compare differences in order to formulate the most effective, meaningful, and accessible recommendations.





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# The AMS Food Bank in Brief

In doing our research, we found that there were over 1000 visits, both new and returning, to the AMS Food Bank between 2014-2015; this increase is expected to continue. Furthermore, statistics from the Food Bank also showed that there are certain populations on campus that are more susceptible to experiencing food insecurity. For example, domestic students who live off-campus are particularly vulnerable and are identified to be a group of concern. Graduate students and international students are also groups to be weary of. High rents, increased living costs, and inadequate student loans continue to contribute to this challenge.

Our recommendations are quite diverse and aim to address different aspects of the organization. We focus on systemic recommendations, such as advocacy for longer staff contract positions with the AMS, and organizational recommendations, including training for staff and volunteers, formulating a vision and mission, and planning events and workshops that build a more resilient and sustainable community. In the long-term, we hope that the research conducted will act as a catalyst in influencing effective policy changes, provide additional valuable support to the AMS Food Bank, and contribute to a field of research on student food insecurity.

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The AMS Food Bank is operated by a team of dedicated student volunteers. Spearheaded by the Executive Team, the group is comprised of the Food Bank Coordinator, Associate Coordinator, Client Relation Managers, Events and Marketing Coordinator, Inventory Control Coordinator, Sponsorship Officer, Volunteer Coordinator, Marketing/Outreach Advisors, and Special Events Volunteer Crew. Together, they offer office hours three days a week, on Mondays and Tuesday from 12-4 and Wednesdays from 1-3 or by appointment, where students are available to drop by the Food Bank. They are located in the lower level of the old Student Union Building.



# TOP 5 Healthy Products In Food Bank!

1) OATS *"Make at least half of your grain products whole grain!"*

- whole grain
- high in fiber, provide vitamin Bs, E, minerals, healthy fats & antioxidants
- lower risks of chronic diseases (eg diabetes)
- maintain healthy weight

*"Have more fiber-rich grains often!"*

2) CANNED BEANS & LEGUMES

- high in fiber, protein, vitamins & minerals (eg folate, potassium, iron)
- manage blood sugar levels

3) CANNED SALMON

*"Eat at least 2 servings of fish each week!"*

- high in protein, vitamin D, calcium, omega-3 fats (aka healthy fats promote healthy development)
- lower cholesterol & prevent cardiovascular diseases

Recipe ① *Fruit & Oatmeal Muesli Overnight Oats*

*Check out the UBC AMS Food Bank Blog!*

Recipe ② *Chicken Sauté with Homestyle Hot Oats*

## FRESH PRODUCE!

4) CARROTS

- beta-carotene → "Vitamin A" antioxidant properties
- vision health
- anti-cancer benefit

5) CUCUMBERS

- Vitamin K rich



To access the service, UBC Students have to show a valid student ID card and answer a short, confidential questionnaire upon arrival. In addition, the organization strives to create a friendly, welcoming, and accessible environment for all visitors. A bulletin board can be found in the Food Bank providing information to visitors on what products are available and nutrition-related resources. Students are able to visit the Food Bank six times per semester and receive one full bag of groceries; students with other family members are eligible to receive two bags. This recommendation is to ensure that there is sufficient inventory for new and returning students throughout the semester. Food Bank coordinators and volunteers will not turn away anyone who requires additional support. They are open to providing referrals to students to other social services off campus if these particular limits are not meeting their needs.



The AMS Food Bank receives donations from the community, including student groups, campus partners, and businesses, such as London Drugs and Save-On-Foods. Shelves are also stocked with food products from Costco and other grocers with generous monetary donations from the community. Food bank coordinators and volunteers often make trips out to these food outlets in order to keep their shelves stocked for students. However, in the near future, this process will be made easier after successful conversations with the AMS Purchasing Office, the entity that purchases food for all of AMS' food businesses and services. The Food Bank will eventually be able to make food purchases through the office at a bulk price.

The organization is now in its 10th year of operation and is striving to alleviate food insecurity by providing more fresh produce and goods for students. The Food Bank is also hoping to raise more awareness about its presence as an emergency service that is accessible to everyone.

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# Background Information

Food insecurity is a growing issue all across Canada. More and more people are experiencing the implications of high living costs and struggling to make ends meet. One particular group that is often overlooked are post-secondary students whom at the moment are becoming one of the largest groups of food bank users (Meal Exchange 2012). Across the country, students have noted the financial difficulty of meeting their daily needs, including accessing sufficient amounts of healthy food. Here at UBC, the AMS Food Bank has seen a 100% increase in usage in the past two semesters (Robinson 2015). As a result, it is important to assess and further understand the extent of student hunger on the UBC campus and the factors that contribute to this phenomenon.



Ensuring food security is very much a part of any strong and resilient food system, especially here at UBC, a campus that prides itself on leading innovative sustainability initiatives. Issues on hunger continue to be a stigmatized topic which requires transparent, accessible, and meaningful discussions to be overcome. When looking at the realm of social sustainability, affordability continues to be one of the biggest barriers for students. Tuition rates have continued to increase dramatically every year. In current dollars, BC students were estimated to pay 35% more for their tuition (\$5,637) than their counterparts in 1992 (\$1,982) (Canadian Federation Students 2013).

In addition, with Vancouver being the world's third-least affordable city, the financial circumstances of students are made even more severe (Marr 2016). According to UBC's Cost Calculator, a Domestic Undergraduate Student in the Faculty of Land and Food Systems living off-campus could potentially pay up to \$19,000 after living costs, personal expenses, and tuition fees during their first year of school; international students could be met with fees up to \$46,338.04. Consequently, some students are eventually forced to make compromises on their food, particularly nutrient-dense foods, to simply make ends meet.

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In order to respond to the growing needs of students, the first university food bank in Alberta opened in 1997; by 2005, that number grew to 51 (Alberta Centre for Active Living 2007). Now, almost all post-secondary institutions have a food bank available for students (Meal Exchange 2012). Besides UBC, other Vancouver Campus food banks have also seen an increased demand, including Simon Fraser University who serviced 2598 emergency grocery vouchers since 2013 (Robinson 2015). As mentioned above, this increased usage can be attributed to high tuition fees, high rents, growing living costs, increased food prices, and job shortages (Gordon 2011). Consequently, BC students currently graduating with bachelor's degrees have the third highest debts in the country (Robinson 2015).

This can also be seen on the East Coast of the country. The University of Guelph's food bank supported more than 500 dependents (children and spouses) since May 2015 (Guelph Student Food Bank 2016). This speaks to the common misconception that people who attend post-graduate institutions can afford to feed themselves adequately. This also highlights the lack of academic and community research on the topic, making it even more difficult to efficiently gauge the severity of student hunger on campuses across Canada. Campus food banks are operated by busy students and have a high turnover of volunteer staff. Statistical records are not a priority and as a result, quantifying the use of foodbanks on- or off-campus by students is challenging.

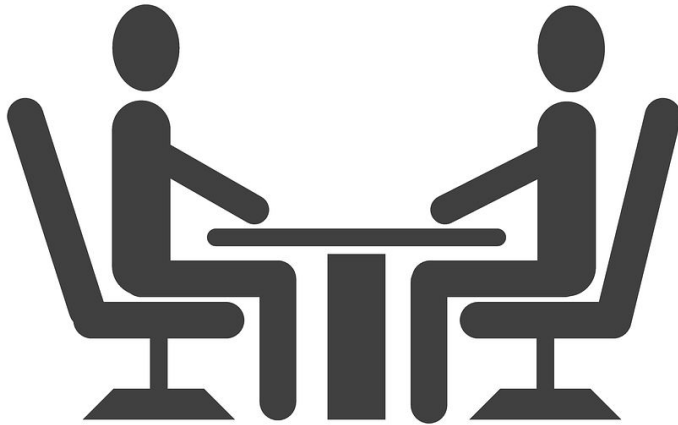


Our goal is to learn about UBC's own food bank and to create a manual for its management and volunteers which will include practical recommendations in order to increase efficiency in daily operations; reduce stigma associated with the use of the service; increase dialogue on food security, health, and social equity; and provide learning opportunities focused on larger food systems issues. To create this manual, we need to understand the strengths of the AMS Food Bank to capitalize on their achievements and the gaps to provide support to staff and volunteers. By conducting this research, we also hope to create partnerships with external stakeholders, in order to maintain a higher volume of food at the Food Bank and create accessible and sustainable solutions for a more food secure campus.



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# Methods



A mixed methods approach was utilized in order to obtain both qualitative and quantitative data. Statistics were taken from the AMS Food Bank database and analyzed. Furthermore, we conducted one-on-one interviews with the AMS Food Bank coordinator Jay Singh and group interviews with the AMS Food Bank volunteers. Discrete observations at the AMS Food Bank were done to see how the volunteers and the coordinator interacted with clients and with each other. Lastly, we contacted, through phone and email, other Canadian city and campus food banks including the North York Harvest Food bank, Richmond food bank and food banks situated at the University of Calgary, Saint Mary's University, and Dalhousie to make case comparisons and identify significant themes or strategies that may be implemented at the AMS Food Bank.

# Statistics

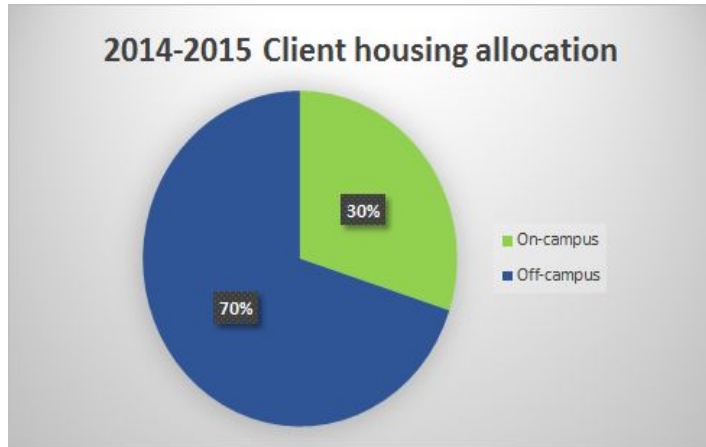


The number of new student clients at the AMS Food Bank between 2014 to 2015 accounts for 19% of the total client base since its opening in 2006

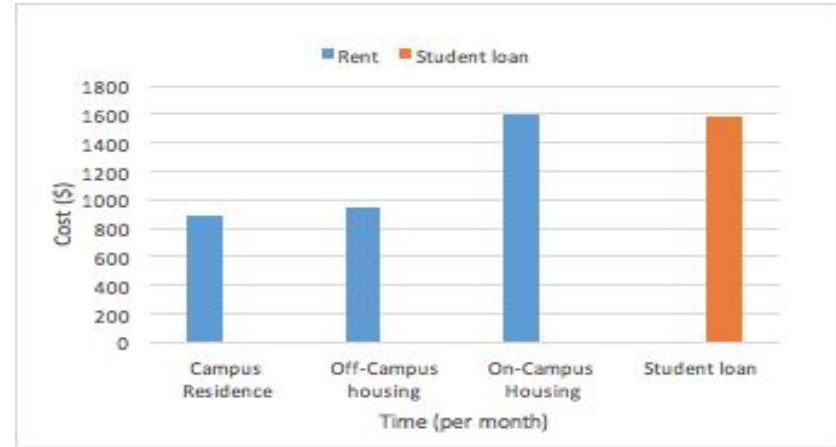


A grand total of 1180 visits at the AMS Food Bank took place between September 2014 to November 2015. The number of student visits to the AMS food bank increases at the end of the term (November and March) as students have most likely used up their funds

## Housing cost for UBC student relative to average student loan in Canada

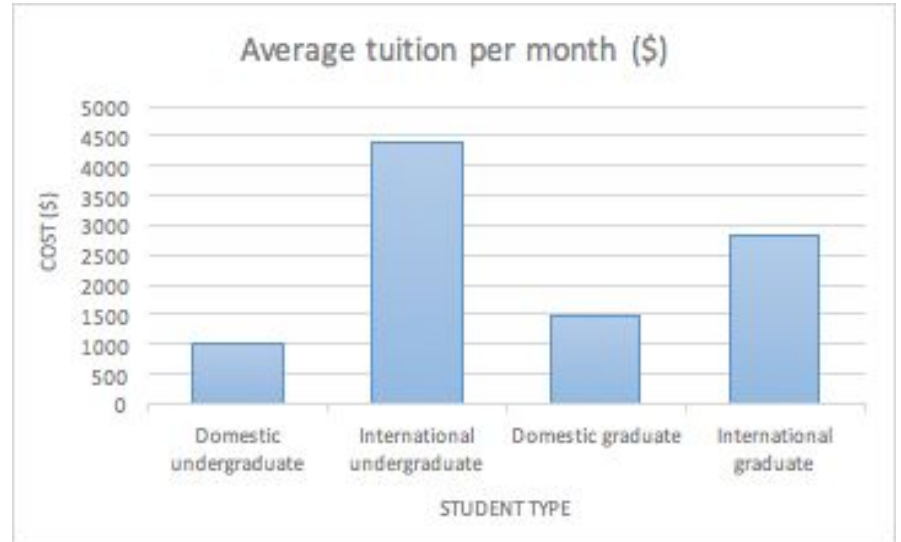
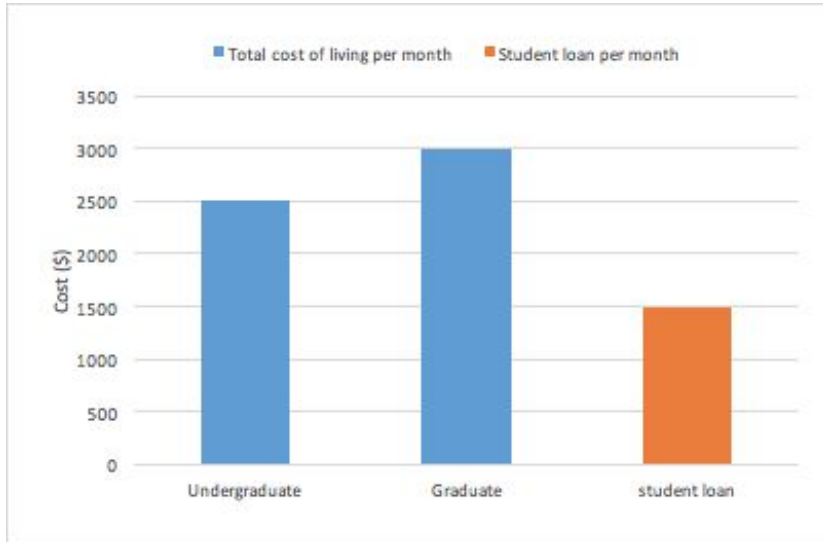


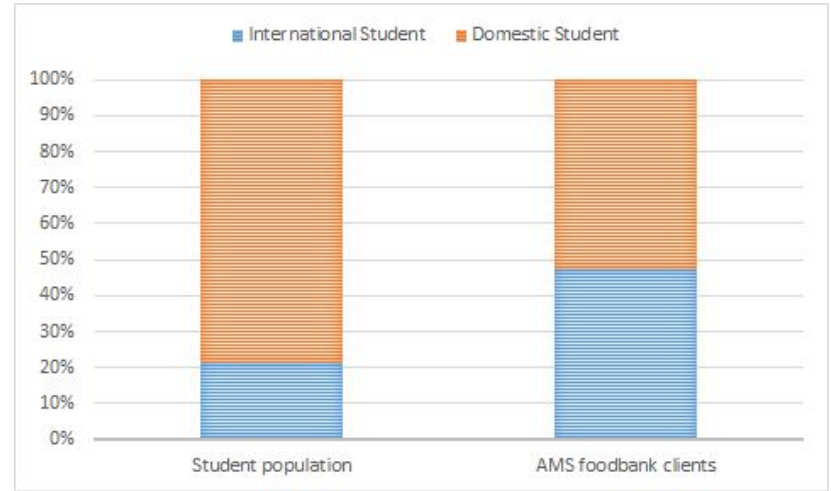
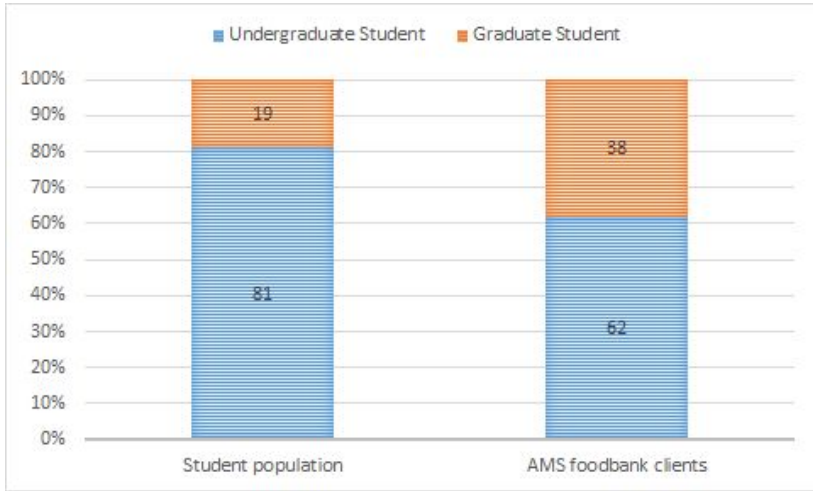
The majority of clients that visited the AMS Food Bank between 2014-2015 live off-campus



The cost of monthly rent for students is lowest for on-campus residence (UBC 2016) with slightly higher costs for off-campus residents in the Lower Mainland (Province of British Columbia 2016). The highest costs are private rentals on campus which on average costs as much as \$1487.50, the total monthly amount of a student loan (Government of Canada 2016). When comparing these costs with the amount of a Student Loan a low-income family would be provided with, we can see that it is not enough to sufficiently sustain any of these housing expenses

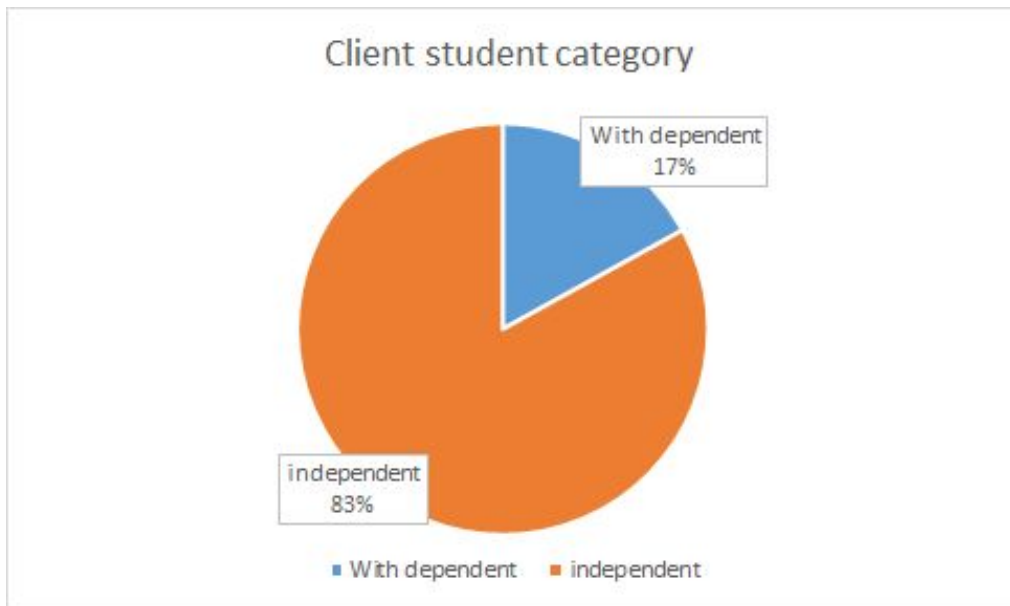
The total cost of living per month in Vancouver for a student far surpasses the average student loan provided by the government for a low-income family in Canada. The total cost of living per month for students is calculated by adding the average tuition cost for domestic students with the cheapest housing price of campus residence and any other living costs.





Graduate students and international students are overrepresented in AMS Food Bank's client base. Graduate Students account for 19% of the total student population at UBC, yet they represent 38% of the Food Bank's clientele. While International Students only account for 21.4% of the total student population at UBC, they make up 47% of the total number of clients that access the AMS Food Bank. The reasons for this overrepresentation is unclear, but it could be due to higher tuition costs when compared to the fees of domestic undergraduate students. They receive no additional student loans or financial assistance from the government or UBC, making them far more susceptible to food insecurity and thus, the need to access the Food Bank. This is also the case as it is difficult to receive financial support from their department or advisor through special grants or fellowships.

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We also suspect that students with dependents may also be at risk in experiencing food insecurity. However, we do not have enough data to confirm that this group is overrepresented in the AMS Food Bank. Thus, additional data should be collected to better characterize the susceptibility to better support this potentially vulnerable group.

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# AMS Food Bank Operations



## Mission Challenges

The information provided by the coordinator, Jay Singh, and two volunteers was very consistent. Both coordinator and volunteers voiced concern around the mission of the AMS Food Bank and how it may be misinterpreted by students. While they promote the AMS Food Bank as fundamentally an "emergency food bank" to be used in exceptional circumstances, they feel that some students use it as a source of free food they can access six times in the semester. This difference in vision has proven to be a long-standing challenge and may result in the re-evaluation of the screening process for new clients and the number of visits allowed per user.

## Sense of Accomplishment

Both coordinator and volunteers highlighted the positive and welcoming atmosphere at the food bank. They took pride in their student-run initiative which has created a very special community in a small location at the old Student Union Building. Singh, the coordinator, specifically expressed his satisfaction with the

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promotion of the food bank and how it has become visible on campus. The increased number of donations appeared to be the main indicator for this accomplishment.

### Vision for the future

Coordinator and volunteers have a distinct vision for the future as they all emphasized the ability to meet the growing needs of their clients. The coordinator also mentioned improvement in the ability to forecast user demands, showing concern for the food bank to be proactive in optimizing donations with demand. No particular timeline or project was mentioned to realize this vision. We have attributed the absence of a scheduled plan to the short twelve month long positions that each coordinator holds and the constant need to attend to daily operations which include managing donations, maintaining opening

hours, educating volunteers and reporting to AMS staff. Furthermore, volunteers commit varying amounts of hours throughout the school year depending on their own availability. As a result, it is difficult for the AMS Food Bank to carry forth long-term plans since it is not staffed for implementation of new projects.



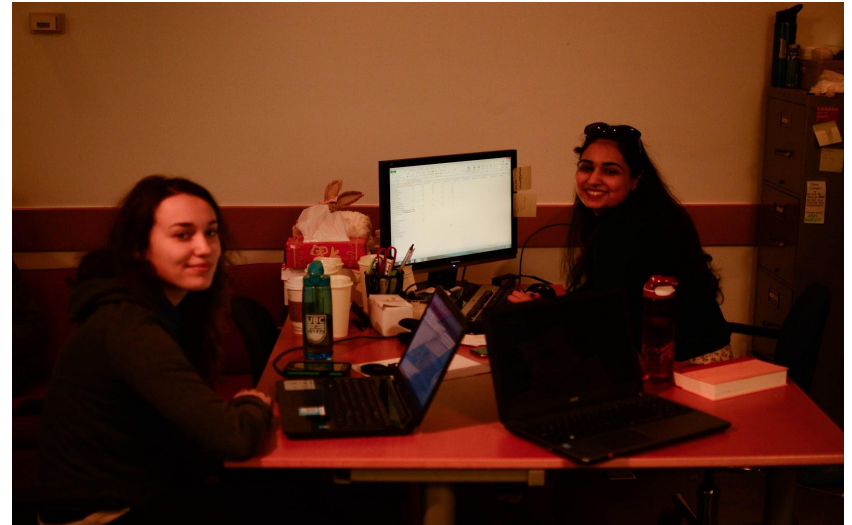


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## Training

Coordinators work on a part-time basis for a year. Since the AMS Food Bank opened in 2006, there has been at least ten people that have held this position. However, there is no formal training given to the new coordinator prior to taking on his/her role as food bank coordinator and there is no transition during which an ending coordinator works side by side with an incoming coordinator. Jay Singh, the current coordinator, explained that his past experience running his own business was definitely an asset for him when he first took on his position at the Food Bank. As a result, all the volunteers we talked to respected him as leader and role model at the AMS Food Bank. However, Singh admitted that he was unfamiliar with the issue of food insecurity and unaware of how prevalent it was on campus. Singh also noted that volunteer training is just as valuable, if not more so, given their frequent interactions with clients.

Volunteers were able to articulate the specific training received in the form of workshops which are facilitated by the coordinator. Topics that were covered included food safety, composting, recycling and appropriate manners and demeanor for the food bank context.



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## Donations

The coordinator provides a list of desirable items to donor organizations to emphasize the collection of certain desirable products that are either high in demand or difficult to acquire. However based on our observations, some of the products found at the food appropriate or in line with their philosophy of being a strictly emergency food bank. During emergency situations, it is essential to provide nutrient dense foods, thus making it especially important to screen types of donations or to educate the donors. The presence of products such as toys, cosmetics, cocktail powder mixes are inconsistent with the vision as an emergency food bank and may in fact attract the kind of clientele the food bank does not want to target. However, we recognize the benefit of having toys or even hygiene products and the difficulty of refusing such donations when knowing some students struggle financially.



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# Learning from Canadian Campus Food Banks

Upon analyzing the data collected from food banks at the University of Calgary, Saint Mary's U. and Dalhousie U., we found common challenges and successes. We also found some useful information on space, stigma and collaboration with external partners which could be of use to the AMS Food Bank. A common challenge amongst all the food banks was the lack of space they had to store their food. The amount of space at all establishments seems to be a significant limiting factor preventing growth or ability to help those in need.

Engaging in conversations related to the social stigma associated with food banks was also a common problem. It is challenging for people to share personal financial constraints and avoid judgement from others. The food banks shared a variety of approaches to mitigate the issue. Some of these strategies included participating in multiple media platforms to create discussion outside the food bank, thus creating a dialogue among food banks users and ensuring a safe space to host these kinds of conversations.

Some food banks have benefited from establishing strong relationship with external partners. These food banks provided more than food by directing clients to community resources external to the food bank for extra support. These resources can range from education on managing your finances to cooking tips to stretch your meals; all contribute to community food security. The campus food bank at Dalhousie U. and Saint Mary's U. have formed a partnership and are collaborating with a charitable organization known as Feed Nova Scotia. These two campus food banks have expressed less concern in maintaining a constant supply of food relative to other food banks because of the consistent food deliveries due to these partnerships.

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# Recommendations

1. Formulate vision and mission statements and action plan to be revisited periodically.

We suggest that the UBC AMS provides resources for the AMS Food Bank to formulate a clear vision, mission statement, and concise action plan which could be reviewed periodically. Developing such statements would help set priorities for coordinators, who would be responsible for implementing relevant programs and projects. Moreover, we recommend defining the term “emergency food bank” clearly for the context of the UBC Vancouver campus in these statements since the AMS Food Bank defines itself as such and consequently needs to target the appropriate population.

2. Training programs

We recommend developing a training program specifically for the coordinator because coordinators currently have minimal training opportunities prior to the start of their contract. One suggestion would be to extend coordinator contracts from 12 month to 13 month contracts. As an example, coordinators hired for 13 month contracts could start in January and finish their contracts in February. In this way, the following coordinator would have a month of training with the previous coordinator. Such a system would provide support for the new coordinator, ensure training, and promote consistency in values and work ethic between coordinators. Given the longer contract of the coordinator position, the food bank would

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require additional financial support from the AMS and UBC, which would ultimately act as an investment to the food bank and its success. Moreover, contextual training aimed at understanding food security would be beneficial to coordinators. This would aid coordinators become more familiar with food systems issues and challenges faced by the food bank.

### 3. Implement a variety of educational opportunities

The food bank could act as an educator, providing opportunities for nutrition education to their clientele as an example. More education and information could be provided on the use of certain products. For instance, infant formula is one of the many products the food bank offers. However, little signage or information exists at the food bank on when formula should be administered or under what circumstances. This is a significant concern because the World Health Organization and Health Canada recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six

months of an infant's life in order to achieve health benefits (Weeks, 2012). In contrast, only 14% of Canadian mothers exclusively breastfeed for six months (Weeks, 2012). As noted by Jean Kouba, president of the Canadian Lactation Consultant Association, this is mainly due to the fact that mothers do not receive sufficient guidance on proper methods of breastfeeding from the health-care system (Weeks, 2012). AMS food bank volunteers and Singh also acknowledged that they were not well-informed in this field, but recognized its importance and showed a desire to learn more about it.

The coordinator and volunteers were open to our suggestion of implementing more signage to inform clients about the value of food items available at the food bank. The consequences of such added signage may imply that there would be room for further evaluation of the items on the shelves and additional training sessions to inform the coordinator and volunteers of the benefits or

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disadvantages associated with particular items. All in all, the idea of implementing these signs was well-received due to the potential benefits for clients.

In this way, we recommend the food bank provide more education on their food products and factors that may impact student hunger. Additional signage on certain products, such as infant formula, may be useful to provide information which can aid clientele to make informed choices that are best suited for their circumstance. As an example, we created a sample poster for the food bank, explaining the significance of breastfeeding in comparison to using infant formula, found on the next page.

Another possibility would include the development of community dinners for clientele, each with varying educational themes such as food safety, easy nutrient-dense recipes, or financial budgeting. This would help build capacity within the

community while engaging in concerns or factors impacting student hunger. Although the food bank does not possess a kitchen, the food bank can build partnerships with other student-run organizations on campus that are passionate about enhancing food security and accessibility on campus, such as Agora Cafe and Sprouts. Agora Cafe is found in the MacMillan building and strives towards sustainability and food security, with further details that can be found on its website <https://blogs.ubc.ca/agora/>. Sprouts is a student-run organization which aims to provide healthy, sustainable, and affordable foods on campus, with further details that can be found on its website <http://www.ubcsprouts.ca/>.

# BREAST IS BEST

Breast milk is the best food for your baby! It's the only food or drink your baby needs for the first 6 months of life

## BENEFITS

- Nutritious & contains antibodies
- Promote jaw development & tooth alignment
- Skin to skin contact = increase oxytocin = happiness boost ♥
- Saves you money!

## MYTH VS FACT

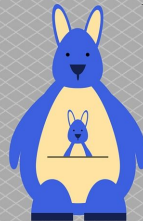
**Myth:** Women do not produce enough milk

**Fact:** Women generally produce more than enough milk

**Myth:** Formula is the same as breast milk

**Fact:** Formula is not the same as breast milk: it does not contain antibodies or enzymes

## BREASTFEEDING IS NOT RECOMMENDED WHEN...



Infants have rare metabolic conditions  
Mothers are HIV+  
Mothers or infants have severe illnesses  
If concerned, please refer to your family physician

Brought to you by the AMS Food Bank

Sample of breastfeeding poster.

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#### 4. Screening donations

We would also recommend screening donations more thoroughly. We recognize that turning away donations can be challenging and must be done so in a sensitive manner in order to educate, rather than discourage, donors. However, screening donations would ensure that donations are more nutrient dense and relevant to clientele that require emergency relief. To do so, food bank staff could speak with each donor before accepting the donation, since staff already record donor information when they drop off donations at the food bank in person. By having a discussion with the donor, this would provide an opportunity for staff to highlight the importance of nutritious donations while explaining the drawbacks and consequences of innutritious ones. Furthermore, the food bank can emphasize the importance of monetary donations because this way the food bank

controls what foods can be purchased based on need and three dollars' worth of food can be purchased for one dollar according to the interview with Singh. This ensures that food bank clientele are receiving the best possible nutrition regardless of their circumstances. Additionally, it may be beneficial to redirect donors to the Christmas Bureau or the Greater Vancouver Food Bank which accept a larger scope of donations to serve varying purposes.

#### 5. Research

Further research on assessing the nutrition of the food products available at the food bank would provide valuable information on which nutrients are readily available or lacking in the foods available on the shelves. This information could help guide clients' choices and food bank staff's orders at stores or requests for donations to ensure the foods



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available at the food bank provide complete or adequate nutrition. It would also be valuable for the food bank to further analyze their quantitative data. Although we had data on the number of undergraduate and graduate users as well as domestic and international users, we did not have access to the information combined, such as the number of users that are undergraduate and domestic. As well, it would be useful to develop information on the breakdown of users per faculty. These statistics would be useful to further understand the demographic of the clientele and how best to cater towards their needs.

Moreover, it may be beneficial to develop a credit system regarding the distribution of food for clientele based on the level of susceptibility. This way, clientele that are more susceptible or vulnerable would be able to receive a higher amount of food credits. This credit system has worked well at the Good Food Centre, a campus food bank at

Ryerson University. Specifically, food bank users are setup on a credit system where they receive on average 10 credits per week to collect food; this is approximately a three-day supply of non-perishable food items and fresh produce (Crisp, 2015). If users are supporting dependents, such as children or siblings, they can receive five additional credits per dependent (Crisp, 2015). By developing a credit system, this helps to ensure that food bank users are receiving adequate quantities and qualities of food.

## 6. Developing Partnerships

It might be beneficial to the AMS Food Bank to register as a partner organization with the Greater Vancouver Food Bank given the number of visits has steadily been increasing since they opened and especially in the past year. The Greater Vancouver Food Bank can be contacted through their website <https://www.foodbank.bc.ca/contact-us/>.

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# Limitations

We greatly appreciate the contributions and input from the AMS Food Bank and all other stakeholders. Inevitably, our group was limited by several factors which has shaped the methodology, data collection and analysis, as well as the final deliverable. One of the major limitations of the project has been the inevitable time constraint of the LFS 450 class. Consequently, our deliverables were limited to objectives and tasks that could be completed within the timeframe of a semester. Also, we were not able to meet with various stakeholders as frequently as we would have preferred. As an example, we were unable to meet with other executives of the food bank besides Jay Singh and the volunteers.

As well, we were unauthorized to access various documents and specific statistical information required for our analysis, including in-depth quantitative raw data from the food bank. Specifically, our group was not able to access the survey questions or responses that the food bank used to determine the demographic and contextual information of each user. This served as a limitation in the way that we could not assess the demographic or context of the clientele in detail. As a result, data collected was predominantly qualitative rather than quantitative. Moreover, we were unauthorized to conduct interviews with the food bank clientele. Therefore, we could not receive direct feedback from users of the food bank, so information was limited to interviews with the food bank coordinator and volunteers.

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Additionally, we were not able to engage with Meal Exchange as initially proposed from the start of our project. While it would have been beneficial to engage with Meal Exchange given the amount of resources and knowledge the organization has on student hunger on campus, we were not able to get in contact with the representative. This was due to the fact that Meal Exchange was undergoing transitions in management.

Although we faced various challenges and limitations throughout the project, our group strived to maintain a positive attitude and produce the best outcome with the opportunities and resources that were available to us.



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# Conclusion

The AMS Food Bank has currently done a fantastic job of meeting the needs of their clientele and continually developing projects to enhance the service to better serve both new and returning users of the food bank. They have managed to develop their capacity along with the growing demand for the food bank. At the same time, there is room for improvement, such as creating a clear vision and long term goals, identifying strategies to address the growing concern of student hunger, as well as thoroughly screening donations. The food bank can also learn from the successes of other campus and city food banks across Canada.

However, it is important to recognize that the food bank is limited in time and resources on what they are able to do without additional support from the UBC community and external stakeholders. We hope this manual prompts more support and funding for the AMS Food Bank, and acts as an avenue to contribute to the field of research on student food insecurity.



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-- UBC LFS Community-Based Experiential Learning Officer

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Holly MacDonald

Alex Nixon

Stephanie Lim

Aja Peterson

-- Saint Mary's University Food Bank

-- University of Calgary

-- Dalhousie University

-- Richmond Food Bank

-- Greater Vancouver Food Bank

-- North York Harvest Food Bank

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