

Food for Thought pantry to provide food and other necessities to students in need

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Food insecurity, or the state of being without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food, is a global problem, and that need is well highlighted

in low-income countries. Even in the United States, many families and individuals are routinely food insecure. The issue, however, is even closer to home for the Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine (SPHTM).

With that in mind, the school will officially open the SPHTM [Food for Thought](#) Student Pantry next week to combat the problem in our community and assist any students who may be dealing with insecurity as they pursue their degrees.

The pantry provides supplemental support to students with either temporary or ongoing needs and is available to all enrolled SPHTM students with no financial restrictions in place for participation.

Food for Thought is located on the first floor of the Tidewater Building in Room 106B (next to the bike room). Students submit orders online and receive email instructions for pick up, which they can do anonymously. Likewise, students, faculty, and staff who would like to contribute to the pantry via monetary donations or food drives can do so through the online portal.

The idea for the food pantry came about during Hurricane Ida, as students expressed concern over their ability to procure non-perishable items and supplies for storm preparation. Establishing a food and resource pantry before the next hurricane became a priority for the Office of Student Experience (OSE).

In surveying students about food insecurity in anticipation of building the pantry, however, organizers discovered that more than 50 percent of those surveyed did not have enough food for themselves or their household at least 1-2 times per week.

Clearly, students needed support year-round.

“We softly launched Food for Thought the second week of August, and we have already provided 30+ students with food and other supplies,” Dr. Erica W. Valenzuela, assistant dean for student experience said. “The utilization of this resource tells us that we are providing the necessary resources to ensure our students have the support they need to be successful here at SPHTM.”

To prepare for launch was not an easy lift. OSE hired graduate assistant Momi Binifer Sagoe, MPH, to spearhead research into food insecurity, while OSE Director Leslie Bayonne and Administrative Coordinator Rozanne Bailey handled the pantry setup and logistics. Going forward, Program Coordinator Colin Foret will manage the day-

to-day needs of the pantry.

“We recognize that we will not be able to provide all the support our students may need,” Valenzuela said, “so we highlight other programs that can fill in the gaps, such as DSNAP and the Swipe out Hunger program located on the uptown campus.”

The grand opening for the Food for Thought Student Pantry will take place on Wednesday, September 7 from 12:00-1:30pm. Light appetizers will be available, and prizes will be given out at the event. All SPHTM students, faculty, and staff are welcome to attend the event in the student lounge on the first floor of Tidewater.