**HEA Healthy Campus**  **Case Study**

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| **HEALTHY CAMPUS CASE STUDY** | |
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| **Name of Institution/ Organisation** | Dublin City University |
| **Who led the initiative?** | The Office of Student Life |
| **Date and timeframe of the initiative.** | 2023-2024 Academic Year |
| **What was the reach of the initiative?** | 2800 students recorded |
| **Initiative Title** | The Pantry – addressing food insecurity at DCU |
| **Aims/ Objectives** | The Pantry is a cost-of-living crisis response that aids students to combat food insecurity experienced throughout third level institutions due to the high cost of living. |
| **The rationale for the action, including any identified health needs.** | Through the creation and analysis of a student wide survey (32% response rate; 6100 responses), it was found that 25% of students agreed to the statement “I worry about being able to afford all of my meals regularly”. This is a significant portion of the student population that must be catered for. On top of this, 60% of students in the same survey are greatly concerned about the Cost of Living. This means that a significant portion of the student population are currently struggling or expect to struggle financially in the  Future. |
| **Identify all frameworks, policies, or strategies this initiative aligns to**  **(internal, local or national)** | DCU Student Life Strategy  DCU Care and Connect (University Student Wellbeing Initiative/ Strategy  Dublin City University Strategy  HEA Healthy Campus Charter and Framework |
| **Summary** | The Pantry is a cost-of-living crisis response undertaken by the Office of Student Life Staff at Dublin City University. This initiative aims to tackle food insecurity amongst students across the institution and provide the base for a substantial meal. Food insecurity is one of the biggest barriers facing students in higher education across the country with students having to make choices daily surrounding food or study. Research has shown that food insecurity impacts the chance of obtaining a degree, has lower odds of graduating, and for first-in-family students, less than half who experienced food insecurity finished their education. The Pantry initiative attempts to shift the norm to make it OK to talk about financial insecurity and food insecurity and that it’s OK to reach out to help.  Originally, The Pantry involved the preparation of meal kits that involved 6 items to create a meal that only required the addition of a protein by students (i.e. A pasta meal kit involved Pasta shells, pasta sauce, passata, canned tomatoes, mixed herbs, and Italian herbs). This meal kit system was very successful in Semester 1 of the 2023/2024 academic year, seeing over 250 users weekly. However, due to the large amount of staff time required for the project involving the organisation, packing, and distributing of the meal kits, this was an unsustainable practice for the long-term sustainability of the initiative.  As a result of this success, and noted unsustainable aspects of the project, the development of The Pantry store was commenced and introduced in Semester 2 of the 2023/2024 academic year from Monday to Wednesday between 9a.m to 5p.m. This store saw a huge increase in usage from students, which allowed them to pick their own 6 items (including toiletry products). This allowed students who followed certain practices such as vegetarianism, veganism, etc to have more input on their chosen items which was not previously available through the meal kit system that was developed. The store also allows students to socialise with other students, which creates a sense of community amongst the student body. Students enter the store and are recorded by the attending student staff in the store and is then informed to pick up to 6 items free of charge. Stock in the store is kept record of by student staff, which is referenced to a staff member. When needed, stock is collected from a local retailer and delivered to The Pantry Store by a staff member.  In addition to The Pantry store, we have developed a free breakfast available to all students between 8:00a.m to 9:30a.m. with the intention of targeting commuting students. This has also seen a large increase in usage over the course of Semester 2. This breakfast includes a piece of fruit, a pot of porridge, and a cup of tea/coffee completely free of charge for the student. |
| **Did you collaborate with internal and/or external stakeholders to deliver?** | Office of Student Life Staff (Padraig Sheehan, Joshua Dunne, Ann-Marie Brophy).  DCU Care & Connect Group  DCU Restaurant  DCU Marketing & Comms  DCU Health & Safety |
| **How was the initiative organised?** | Through the conduction of a student wide survey, we explored the student profile of Dublin City University regarding their lifestyle. This survey covered a wide range of topics such as how satisfied are students with various aspects of their university life, financial wellbeing, travel to and from college, mental wellbeing, etc. This saw a response from over 6100 students, which translates to a 32% response rate of the entire student population. Through this, we learned about the need for a service like The Pantry for students.  First iterations of the project involved the development of meal kits as a proof of need during Semester 1 of the 2023/2024 academic year, which was used to develop the space for The Pantry Store in Semester 2 of the 2023/2024 academic year. |
| **What resources did you need?** | DCU Student Life funded the project. Staffing and staffing costs was by far the largest resource requirements. As the project grew and expanded, The Pantry Store required staffing during opening hours and the breakfast required staff. Over time, to ensure the longevity of the initiative, data was collected to identify the most popular times and usage, and the operating hours were adjusted in line with student needs. |
| **Has it been evaluated? How successful has it been?** | Over 2800 students utilised over a 16-week period |
| **Any future plans, including the sustainability of the initiative?** | The sustainability of the initiative poses a few challenges. We have begun talks with the Educational Trust for sponsorship to support the breakfast service. We have also teamed up with FoodCloud which will allow for the continuation of the service throughout the institute, therefore becoming a key component of the sustainability of The Pantry. |
| **Key Learning Points** | * **Marketing and Comms** The Pantry Store became a victim of its own success in many ways. We began marketing and promoting the initiative through social media predominantly. After approximately a fortnight, we made the decision to no longer promote it as the demand was far outreaching the supply. This ensured that those who were most in need were able to access it. * **Stigma** We very intentionally selected a location front and centre of our student centre where The Pantry was impossible to miss showing that we were proud to showcase it in the hope students would not feel shame walking to a hidden room in a corridor. * **Sustainability** Sustaining the initiative is key, we have begun talks with the Educational Trust for sponsorship and FoodCloud for delivery of the service. |

**Healthy Campus Framework Categories (please tick all that apply)**

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| **Healthy Campus Process** | **Whole Campus Approach** | **Topic** | **Population Group** |
| Commit | Leadership, Strategy & Governance | Alcohol | Students |
| Coordinate | Campus Environment (Facilities & Services) | Substance Misuse | Staff |
| Consult | Campus Culture & Communications | Healthy Eating / Food | Wider community |
| Create | Personal & Professional Development | Mental Health & Wellbeing | Other |
| Celebrate & Continue |  | Sexual Health & Wellbeing |  |
|  |  | Tobacco Free Campus |  |
|  |  | Physical Activity / Active Transport |  |
|  |  | Wellbeing on the Curriculum (can also fall under ‘Personal & Professional Development) |  |
|  |  | Health & Sustainability |  |
|  |  | Other |  |

**Contact Details**

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| **Links** | <https://dcustudentlife.ie/thepantry> |