

POLICY PAPER

Food Security

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Introduction

As the financial burden associated with post-secondary education is rising every year, there is an increasing amount of students who struggle with food insecurity. Specifically, students from marginalized identities including but not limited to women, people of colour, Indigenous students, first generation students, LGBTQ+ students and international students struggle with food insecurity to a greater degree. While financial burdens play a significant role in food insecurity, it is important to note that the systemic barriers are much larger and broad than the cost of food. With this in mind, there are significant actions that the stakeholders can take to ensure more students are food secure. In this paper, food security shall be defined as access to nutritional and complete meals that are in line with all cultural and dietary restrictions, free of financial barriers to access.

Primarily, students face significant financial burden in accessing food. In a 2017 food security survey with over 100 respondents, 55% of students identified that they have worried about running out of food with no money to purchase more¹. In addition, 81% of respondents indicated that food costs was one of the largest barriers to accessing food². In response to these trends, the MSU has provided services to specifically address food insecurity on campus as well as the creation of the Emergency Bursary Fund. However, larger changes must be made by stakeholders in order to implement a comprehensive approach to addressing student food insecurity.

In addition to the affordability of food, students struggle to access options that align with their lifestyle, cultural or religious restrictions. Notably, food options are limited for vegetarians, vegans and those who choose to live a healthier lifestyle. However, the limitations for food options that support cultural or religious restrictions like Kosher, Hillel and Halal options are even more severe. Some students who choose to eat locally sourced food are unable to access sustainable options on campus. Finally, students who have allergies or ingredient concerns have expressed challenges associated with ingredient transparency. In accordance with these concerns, this paper will address necessary steps that will reduce student food insecurity.

In keeping with affordability, this paper will also discuss the future of Paradise catering and the monopoly that currently exists. As students and student groups face barriers in providing food options at events, the MSU will aim to address these student concerns with regards to the limited food options at an unreasonably high price. In addition to the concerns regarding the price of Paradise catering, this paper will address some of the

¹ University Affairs, McMaster Food Security Survey, raw data, McMaster Students Union, Hamilton.

² Ibid.

failures of Paradise catering in addressing dietary and cultural restrictions. As the main food catering provider on campus, it is concerning to students that student feedback is not heard and addressed by Paradise catering. While the MSU recognizes that Paradise catering and McMaster University exist as one, there are serious student concerns about the Paradise catering monopoly.

This policy will also discuss the importance of local food sourcing in the larger scope of food security. As students may choose to eat locally sourced food exclusively, access to local food options plays into the overall discussion of food insecurity faced by students. In addition, locally sourced food options are often more expensive, which creates an additional financial burden for students. As local food sourcing plays a role in overall food sustainability and addresses certain lifestyle choices of students, it will be discussed in this policy in relation to its role in overall food security.

It should be noted that while budgetary choices and lifestyles play a large role in food insecurity, large systemic barriers exist that prevent students from accessing food that is in line with their lifestyle. The onus should not be placed on students to navigate food systems in order to meet their dietary, cultural and religious restrictions. It should be the role of the university and other stakeholders to provide an inclusive campus for all students, regardless of religion, culture, dietary restrictions and lifestyle choices. In keeping with McMaster's commitment to creating an inclusive campus, food security is the responsibility of all and should be tackled from a comprehensive lens in collaboration with all stakeholders.

Affordability

Price

Principle: All students should have access to affordable and healthy food on campus.

Principle: McMaster University should be making efforts to reduce food waste.

Principle: Students should be able to make informed decisions on their food purchases.

Concern: Although the MSU recognizes that ingredients for healthier options are more expensive, there should not be a financial barrier for students who choose to live a healthier lifestyle.

Concern: The high price of food options on campus poses a financial burden on students.

Concern: Food prices are not readily available at all food venues on campus, resulting in students who are unaware of the cost of the product they are purchasing.

Recommendation: McMaster Hospitality Services should ensure that all food prices are readily available and easy to identify for students.

Recommendation: McMaster Hospitality Services should lower the prices of healthier food options to promote a healthier lifestyle at a comparable price to alternatives.

Recommendation: McMaster Hospitality Services should offer a wider range of food

prices to include nutritional options at various price points.

Recommendation: McMaster Hospitality Services should hire a new Food Security Analyst to be tasked with developing strategies to lower food prices on campus.

Recommendation: McMaster Hospitality Services should provide sales towards the end of the day on foods that would otherwise be thrown out to reduce food waste and improve food affordability.

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Price is an important aspect of on-campus food and according to a recent survey, 81% of students consider the nutritional value of on-campus foods when purchasing³. It is important that students can make informed food choices and that healthy food options are easily accessible. All food options should be affordable, in accordance with student needs. Affordable is defined as comparable to market value, such that all items from McMaster food locations are not unreasonably more expensive than their counterparts at off-campus locations. It is a concern of the students that this need is not being met by McMaster Hospitality Services and while it is acknowledged that healthier food ingredients can be more expensive relative to unhealthier options, there should not be a financial barrier to pursuing a healthy lifestyle for McMaster students. To explain, the price of healthier food options should be reduced to be offered at a comparable price to less healthier food options. It should not be the case that unhealthy food prices are increased to make these options more comparable.

³ University Affairs, McMaster Food Security Survey, raw data, McMaster Students Union, Hamilton.

The Slam Dunk Breakfast at La Piazza is \$5.95 before tax and its nutritional value can be seen below in Figure X, contrasted with the nutritional value of the Skinny Taco Salad from East Meets West Bistro⁴. This salad is \$8.40 before tax, despite being relatively more nutritious and a smaller portion than the Slam Dunk Breakfast⁵.

Nutrition Facts/Valeur nutritive			
SlamDunk Breakfast (SAUSAGE)(SlamDunk Déjeuner (SAUCISSE))			
Per 1 Repas (536.1 g) Par 1 Repas (536.1 g)	Amount Teneur	% Daily value % valeur quotidienne	
Calories / Calories	1063.72		
Fat / Lipides	57.16g	87.94%	
Saturated / saturés + Trans / trans	18.1g 0.38g		
Cholesterol / Cholestérol	629.92mg	209.97%	
Sodium / Sodium	2334.52mg		
Carbohydrate / Glucides	91.47g	30.49%	
Fiber / Fibres	5.96g	23.84%	
Sugars / Sucres	4.07g		
Protein / Protéines	45.56g		
Vitamin A / Vitamine A	30.04%	Calcium / Calcium	49.38%
Vitamin C / Vitamine C	8.2%	Iron / Fer	58.43%
Potato, Hashbrown Patty Frz; Sausage, Pork Patty 2z Ckd; Pancake Mix, Plain; Water; Bread White; Egg, Jumbo			
Contains: Eggs, Milk, Soy, Sulphites, Wheat			

Nutrition Facts/Valeur nutritive			
Skinny Taco Salad(Maigre Taco salade)			
Per 1 Portion (476 g) Par 1 Portion (476 g)	Amount Teneur	% Daily value % valeur quotidienne	
Calories / Calories	695.02		
Fat / Lipides	43.9g	67.54%	
Saturated / saturés + Trans / trans	19.42g 1.11g		
Cholesterol / Cholestérol	90.92mg	30.31%	
Sodium / Sodium	1092.78mg		
Carbohydrate / Glucides	55.17g	18.39%	
Fiber / Fibres	7.5g	30%	
Sugars / Sucres	11.03g		
Protein / Protéines	21.13g		
Vitamin A / Vitamine A	27.54%	Calcium / Calcium	50.61%
Vitamin C / Vitamine C	40.13%	Iron / Fer	15.43%
Sour Cream, Real Bulk; Corn, Whole Kernel Cnd; Margarine, Solids; Pepper, Black Grd; Lettuce, Iceberg; Cheese, Cheddar; Chips Tortilla Round; Sauce, Salsa Mild ; Peppers, Jalapeno Fresh; Onions, Green Chopped; Tomatoes, Grape			
Contains: Milk, Wheat			

Figure 1: The nutritional value of Slam Dunk Breakfast (left) and Skinny Taco Salad⁶.

When asked how often students rely on low cost foods to avoid running out of food, 58% said that this occurs at least weekly, yet, as stated previously, many students consider the nutritional value of food on-campus⁷. This dissonance is perpetuated by the higher costs of nutritional meals on campus, especially as 81% of students noted that food costs are one of the largest barriers to accessing food and 36% disagree that they can afford to purchase healthy, balanced meals⁸. Therefore, to allow for more students to access healthy and affordable food on campus, McMaster Hospitality Services should lower the prices of healthier food options. The prices of healthy food options should be comparable to the unhealthy counterparts and to their market value. The price of healthy food options should not be a deterrent for students to make positive lifestyle choices and so, healthy options should not be an inflated and unreasonable markup from the unhealthy option. This could be accomplished by the implementation of a new position under McMaster

⁴ "Nutritional Information". 2017. *McMaster Hospitality Services*. <http://hospitality.mcmaster.ca/nutrition.html>.

⁵ "Menu". 2017. *McMaster Hospitality Services*. <http://hospitality.mcmaster.ca/menu.html>.

⁶ "Nutritional Information". 2017. *McMaster Hospitality Services*. <http://hospitality.mcmaster.ca/nutrition.html>.

⁷ University Affairs, McMaster Food Security Survey , raw data, McMaster Students Union, Hamilton.

⁸ Ibid, 7.

Hospitality Services, called a Food Security Analyst, who is responsible for developing strategies to lower food costs on campus. This would result in an increase of food security for McMaster students to be done in an effective. In addition to lowering the cost of foods overall, the MSU believes that on-campus food locations should offer food to students at the cost to reduce food waste. Since this food will go to waste anyways, the MSU believes that these end of day sales should not be a means to increasing profit but should provide students a way to access more affordable food options. The cafe in the Institute for Applied Health Science building provides discounts near the closing time of the cafe to encourage sales and the other on-campus food locations should follow this example. This will decrease the dissonance that students faced when challenged with purchasing cheap, unhealthy food or food with nutritional value.

Paradise Catering

Principle: Student groups should have access to catering options that are reasonably priced and address all dietary and cultural restrictions.

Concern: The monopoly that exists with Paradise catering restricts student groups from accessing catering options that address cultural and dietary restrictions at an affordable price.

Concern: Student groups are limited in the spaces that are available outside of the Paradise catering monopoly, which poses a financial barrier to student groups.

Concern: Paradise catering fails to offer suitable food options that address all dietary and cultural restrictions.

Concern: The Paradise catering monopoly allows for the disregard of student concerns in their overall operation.

Concern: Paradise catering does not gather any form of feedback on student satisfaction or their ability to address student concerns.

Concern: The monopoly that exists with Paradise catering allows for unreasonably inflated prices that are not comparable with market alternatives.

Recommendation: McMaster University should ensure that Paradise catering offers food that addresses all dietary and cultural restrictions.

Recommendation: In the case that Paradise catering is unable to offer food that addresses dietary and cultural restrictions, McMaster University should allow student groups to cater with outside vendors that are able to meet these restrictions.

Recommendation: McMaster University should ensure that Paradise catering provides an appropriate amount of food that reflects the market value.

Recommendation: McMaster University should work with Paradise catering to ensure that student feedback is collected and taken into consideration in order to ensure student concerns are identified and addressed.

Recommendation: McMaster University should eliminate the Paradise catering monopoly of food catering options on campus for students and student groups.

Recommendation: In the interim, McMaster University should ensure that all new buildings that are built onwards of April 2017 should be exempt from the Paradise Catering monopoly agreement.

Recommendation: In the interim, McMaster University should allow all small student groups to be exempt from the Paradise catering monopoly.

Recommendation: In the interim, McMaster University should allow for outside catering services in primary student spaces.

As the primary catering service on campus, students have expressed significant concerns with Paradise catering. In the 2017 Food Security Forum, students identified various frustrations with the Paradise catering monopoly⁹. With regard to student groups who run events on campus, significant financial barriers exist as it is often very expensive to order Paradise catering¹⁰. Specifically, the monopoly that exists with Paradise catering allows for unreasonably inflated prices that are incomparable to prices offered by alternative catering services. As a result, a significant portion of event budgets is allocated to the cost of food. In addition, students are concerned that the amount of food that is offered by Paradise catering is disproportional to the amount charged.

In addition, students are concerned that Paradise catering fails to provide sustainable and

⁹ University Affairs, Food Security Forum, raw data. Hamilton, Ontario.

¹⁰ University Affairs, Food Security Survey, raw data. Hamilton, Ontario.

appropriate food options for students who have ingredient, cultural or religious food restrictions¹¹. For example, this includes but is not limited to allergies, Kosher, Hillel, Halal, vegan and vegetarian options. At the 2017 MSU Policy Conference, students identified that Paradise catering had failed to meet dietary restrictions in the past and as a result of the monopoly, these groups were limited in the options that they were able to provide for events¹². In order to address accessibility concerns, the MSU believes that McMaster University should work to ensure that Paradise catering is able to provide food options that are acceptable for events with all dietary restrictions. In the case that Paradise catering is unable to address these dietary restrictions, student groups should not be penalized and should not have to compromise their dietary restrictions. In these situations, the MSU believes that student groups should be exempt from the Paradise catering monopoly in that they should be able to order catering from any outside company that is able to accommodate their dietary restrictions.

As students are currently the main customers of Paradise catering, it is concerning that there is no student feedback involved in their operations. As a result of the Paradise catering monopoly, students feel restricted and dissatisfied with the service that is offered. In response to this, the MSU believes that Paradise catering and McMaster University should work to address student concerns by conducting a survey to receive feedback and then work to implement change based on the feedback. This feedback survey should aim to assess student satisfaction on a wide variety of topics including:

- food prices
- catering options
- ability to address dietary restrictions
- quality of food
- quality of service
- flexibility of food orders
- menu items
- ingredient and preparation transparency
- ease of order
- customer service

As previously discussed, there are significant student concerns with regards to the Paradise catering monopoly. As a result of this monopoly, Paradise catering has failed to address major student concerns surrounding food accessibility and dietary restrictions as they do not compete with other vendors. For these reasons, the MSU believes that McMaster

¹¹ University Affairs, MSU Policy Conference, raw data. Hamilton, Ontario.

¹² Ibid, 11.

University should eliminate the agreement with Paradise catering that establishes a monopoly in order to allow students and student groups to order catering from any outside vendor. This will place pressure on Paradise catering to address student concerns in order to become a competitive catering service on campus for students. While the University may choose to keep this monopoly in place for outside organizations who host events on campus, the MSU believes that students and student groups should not incur the substantial financial barriers that are associated with hosting events with Paradise catering. In the interim, there are significant steps that McMaster University can take in order to ensure that student concerns are immediately addressed.

Firstly, McMaster University should ensure that all new buildings that are built onwards of April 2017 should be exempt from the monopoly agreement with Paradise catering. In a commitment to phasing out the monopoly agreement, any new buildings should be built with student concerns in mind. Therefore, event spaces in these buildings should allow for outside vendors to offer their catering services.

Next, McMaster University should allow small student groups to order catering from outside vendors in all buildings on campus. A small student group shall be defined as any group with a budget of under \$500. With a limited budget of \$500, it is unreasonable for small student groups to be able to afford food for larger events with the high price of Paradise catering. In order to provide the opportunity for these smaller groups to run events without the financial burden of Paradise catering, McMaster University should allow these smaller groups to order outside catering options that are able to provide more affordable options.

While there are some spaces that are not restricted to Paradise catering, these spaces are limited and restricted in the types of events that are able to take place. For example, there are no large banquet-style spaces that allow for non-Paradise catering. Spaces like CIBC Hall, Celebration Hall, Bridges Cafe, and Council Chambers (GH 111) are prime locations for students who choose to host more formal events like large forums, formal dinners and conferences. However, these rooms are restricted by the Paradise catering monopoly. In response to this, McMaster University should allow for students and student groups to order catering from outside vendors in order to alleviate some of the financial burden associated with Paradise catering.

On-Campus Meal Plan

Principle: The mandatory meal plan should not be a financial barrier for students to live in residence.

Principle: The mandatory meal plan should ensure food security for all students living on residence.

Concern: The upfront costs of the meal plan are financially inaccessible to students living in residence.

Concern: There is no financial aid available for students who are required to pay for a meal plan.

Concern: The Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) provides funding in a two-payment model to help lessen the financial burden of post-secondary education. However, the large upfront cost for the mandatory meal plan creates a barrier to purchasing a full-year meal plan.

Concern: The Reduced Meal Plan is only offered to students living in Bates and Mary Keyes.

Concern: Students feel pressured to purchase the Welcome Week Meal Plan which can be a financial burden

Recommendation: Hospitality Services should provide the option for students to make two payment installments for their meal plan.

Recommendation: The Food Security Analyst in McMaster Hospitality Services should be tasked with developing an affordable meal plan that reflects the costs of food on campus for a full year, based on student feedback.

Recommendation: The Reduced Meal Plan should be expanded to be offered to all students living in residence.

Recommendation: McMaster University should create a bursary fund to assist students in accessing the mandatory on-campus meal plan.

Recommendation: McMaster University should provide a discounted option for the

mandatory on-campus meal plan for low-income students.

Recommendation: McMaster University should open campus eateries during Welcome Week plan

Recommendation: McMaster University should advertise that the the Welcome Week Meal Plan is an optional agreement and that students can still purchase food from vendors using their regular meal plan during Welcome Week

According to the Terms of Conditions of the Hospitality Services Meal Plan the “Residence Meal Plan is an integral component of living in any of the McMaster University residences and all students living in residence must purchase a mandatory meal plan – there are no exemptions.”¹³ The mandatory meal plan however should not a financial barrier to students wishing to live in residence.

Hospitality Services currently offers meal plan options with the following options for 2016-2017:

Meal Plan Option	Group A (Full Meal Plans)*	Group B (Reduced Meal Plans)*
Minimum	\$3,595	\$2,675
Light	\$3,795	\$2,875
Regular	\$3,995	\$3,075
Varsity	\$4,195	\$3,275

Figure 2: McMaster Meal Plans offered by McMaster Hospitality Services

There are 62 “lecture days” in a given term (excluding weekends and the final examinations). Just counting lecture days leaves students to spend under \$28/day for the entire year while on a Minimum Meal Plan⁷. 66% of respondents from the MSU Food Security Survey believe that the meal plan is not an affordable option¹⁴. Furthermore,

¹³ McMaster Hospitality Services. 2017. “Meal Plans.” [Http://Hospitality.mcmaster.ca/Meal_plans/Meal-Plans.html](http://Hospitality.mcmaster.ca/Meal_plans/Meal-Plans.html). Accessed March 8. http://hospitality.mcmaster.ca/meal_plans/meal-plans.html.

¹⁴ University Affairs, McMaster Food Security Survey , raw data, McMaster Students Union, Hamilton.

multiple McMaster students have expressed concern of having to pay additionally after purchasing what they have believed to be a costly meal plan. Students were under the impression that the meal plan would be able to last them the entire year but found having to pay extra at around the start of the second term.

McMaster University should allow for students to pay the mandatory meal plan in two separate installments, in Term 1 and Term 2, in order to match the OSAP two payment funding model. This would allow to ease the financial burden as students will receive some financial assistance around this time. Furthermore, McMaster Hospitality Services should task the new position created to develop an affordable meal plan that reflects the costs of food on campus for a full year, based on student feedback. Students should be made aware of the average cost of food/meal on campus in relation to their meal plan. The university should be focus on more transparent advertising when showcasing the different types of meal plan.

Students believe that there should be financial aid available to students who wish to live in residence but are unable to purchase a meal plan. Students believe that the university should support students who find the meal financially inaccessible. The university should create a bursary fund to assist students in accessing the mandatory on-campus meal plan. Moreover, students from low-income backgrounds may not find living in residence with a mandatory meal plan or purchasing a meal plan to be a financially accessible option. The university should support these students. Low-income status shall be defined by the low income threshold cut off determined by OSAP based on family size (ie. 4 people - \$45,987), more information can be found on the OSAP website¹⁵. McMaster University should provide a discounted option for the mandatory on-campus meal plan for low-income students.

The university should also advertise the Welcome Week Meal Plan as an optional alternative to the meal plan during Welcome Week. Specifically, incoming first years have felt misled by advertisements to think that the Welcome Week Meal Plan was the only option for purchasing food during welcome week when food was available to purchase through their meal plan. Further, in the 2016-2017 school year, food vendors on campus were not open during Welcome Week. This poses a huge concern for students that did not purchase the Welcome Week Meal plan and poses a significant barrier to accessing food. While this will be addressed in welcome week 2017, the MSU believes that the university should continue to open food vendors on campus during Welcome Week to make food

¹⁵ Government of Ontario, Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development. 2017. "Welcome to the Ontario Student Assistance Program:Canada Student Grant for Persons from Low-Income Families (16-17)." Accessed March 12. <https://osap.gov.on.ca/OSAPPortal/en/A-ZListofAid/PRDR015056.html>.

available to both Reps and students.

Moreover, currently only students living in Bates and Mary Keyes are able to purchase the reduced meal plan. Since students living on residences have different lifestyles which can affect how they purchase meals on campus (ie. going home more often, utilizing the kitchen in the common room), hospitality services should look to extend the reduced meal plan to students living in all residences.

Off-Campus Meal Plan

Principle: Students who live off campus should have access to a more economical meal plan.

Concern: The current Freedom and Term plans for off-campus students lack significant discounts that would entice students to enroll.

Concern: The conditions for the Term plan are unusually restrictive which prevent off-campus students from enrolling.

Recommendation: Hospitality Services should lower the initial deposit for the Freedom plan to \$50 and increase the discount percentage to 10% for Off-Campus students.

Recommendation: Hospitality Services should provide an option for first year students living off campus to access a meal plan that is comparable to the on-campus meal plan.

Recommendation: McMaster University should provide a discounted option for the off-campus first year meal plan for low-income students.

By providing a more flexible economical meal plan, similar to the current Freedom plan but with slight modifications, this will encourage a substantial amount of students for enrollment. Providing healthier affordable stable items (sandwiches, cold meals, etc.) offered at Hospitality Services locations, would increase the sales of these items and overall increase revenue for meal plans.

The full-time undergraduate population constitutes an overwhelming majority of the consumer base for Hospitality Services and having certain categories of students struggling to make meal purchases on campus because of financial difficulties proves to be an ongoing problem with no resolution. The meals plans offered by Hospitality Services to off-campus students are non sequitur given it would be illogical to upfront \$100 or \$260 at \$65 per week intervals just to have a meal plan that provides either pressures to bulk buying near

the end term date or that the discount offered is too minuscule to make any substantive difference that it still makes food on-campus expensive and risk losing customers¹⁶.

The enhanced meal plan will have similar characteristics as the staff and faculty meal plan, but offers a lower 10% discount for on-campus food purchases that are made through Hospitality Services only and the minimum initial deposit will be \$50. It should also offer the same structure on how much you can spend and add after the initial deposit without a term date¹⁷. This plan can offer students with the flexibility to purchase food whenever they can afford to, without the pressures of worrying about the term date closing in or that the discount offered is too minuscule that it still makes food on-campus extremely expensive and lose customers. This ultimately deters a substantial number of students to make food-purchases at any Hospitality Services related vendors entirely due to prices and smaller portions¹⁸.

Students who apply for the emergency bursary are usually students who are experiencing extenuating circumstances and as a last resort turn to the MSU for financial aid when the university fails to provide them with any. The McMaster General Bursary is only disbursed during the Winter semester and often insufficient to help cover spikes in expenses that may occur in different periods of the academic year¹⁹. By relieving financial pressures through the emergency bursary and the enhanced Freedom meal plan, it will not only help relieve burden for daily food expenses for students, but also drive down food insecurity on campus because students will have access to meal plans.

Ultimately, the goal is to encourage as many enrollments as possible so that students can have access to affordable meals and staple food items on campus every day to fight food insecurity, and sustain daily nutritional requirements to enhance student's academic success. Studies have shown that school's with food programs have been linked with positive reinforcement towards a student's psychological and physical state, which in turn bolster a student's learning and academic performance on campus²⁰.

The enhanced Freedom meal plan can help increase revenue for the University because it will decrease the number of high cost transaction fees associated with students who use credit /debit cards and can instead process payments more easily through Hospitality

¹⁶ McMaster Hospitality Services. (2017, January 20). *Meal Plans*. Retrieved from McMaster Hospitality Services: http://hospitality.mcmaster.ca/meal_plans/meal-plans.html

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 16.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 16.

¹⁹ "McMaster Bursary Program Dates." Office of Student Financial Aid & Scholarships. Accessed February 23, 2017. <https://sfas.mcmaster.ca/important-dates/mcmaster-bursary-program-dates/>.

²⁰ "Food Secure Canada." (2017, 01 20). Coalition for Healthy School Food. Accessed from Food Secure Canada: <https://foodsecurecanada.org/coalitionforhealthyschoolfood>

Services²¹. By providing a cheaper alternative to pay seamlessly for meals on campus, it will increase the usage for students with meal plans to use their student cards to pay for meals and increase overall net sales through higher enrollment.

If Hospitality Services provides an option for first year students living off campus to access a meal plan that is comparable to the on-campus meal plan, it would encourage enrollment of first-year students because it would provide off campus students with hot ready meals that are convenient and accessible on campus at a discounted rate. This would also cater towards first year off-campus students who are low-income because of the incentives of favourable discounts that entices first year off-campus students to enroll. Offering that option would increase overall revenue and expand consumer base into the number of first year students.

Emergency Bursary Fund

Principle: Students should have adequate financial support with the rising costs of tuition and living expenses that places a burden on academic performance.

Concern: There is an increasing number of students applying for the Emergency Bursary Fund annually that exceeds the allocated MSU contribution towards the fund.

Concern: The fact that the Emergency Bursary Fund is 100% funded by MSU contribution, and requires students to fund themselves, directly indicates a dereliction of duty of the University to provide academic success to all students on an equitable level.

Recommendation: In the interim, the University should match the MSU contribution towards the MSU Emergency Bursary Fund of \$10,000 as an alternative means to provide short-term financial assistance to students that can be used towards relieving serious unexpected financial problems.

Recommendation: Ultimately, the University should take full responsibility for the \$20,000 of the Emergency Bursary Fund to address the rising demand from students not the MSU.

It is apparent as recent MSU referendums has indicated and exuberant student outcry

²¹ Flavelle, Dana. "How credit card fees for merchants work." Toronto Star. July 23, 2013. Accessed February 23, 2017. https://www.thestar.com/business/personal_finance/2013/07/23/how_credit_card_fees_for_merchants_work.html.

towards food affordability on campus has warranted a need for reform in the structuring of financial support allocated to full-time undergraduate students who demonstrate urgent financial need due to exceptional circumstances as determined by the Office of Student Financial Aid & Scholarships²². With inflation and food prices exponentially increasing annually, the University needs to help advance this comprehensive financial-aid funding that aims to support students who are experiencing the financial difficulties of covering daily expenditures²³. The bursary's purpose is to provide students with an emergency line of funds to temporarily cover short-term living and basic expenses. Often times, students who apply for the bursary are usually using the funds to cover basic daily necessities such as rent, utilities, or just a meal for the day²⁴.

The most recent allocation of funding towards the MSU Emergency Bursary Fund was \$10,000 and nearly 50% of the fund were disbursed which showed a clear indication that students need substantial financial support from the University²⁵. Since January 2017, \$4,790 was distributed to 6 students who experienced financial difficulties and the emergency bursary is expected to run dry by the end of the academic year²⁶. With the increase in the number of users at Mac Bread Bin used by students over recent years, it signifies an increase in food insecurity on campus and around the McMaster community²⁷.

Post-Secondary education tuition is already a heavy burden towards student's financial situations, and applying for the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) from the provincial government can only partially cover the tuition expenses in post-secondary education at McMaster²⁸. Therefore, the University should trial-run an allocation of \$10,000 in matched funds for two year towards the MSU Emergency Bursary Fund to determine whether the usage of the bursary enhances financial stability towards students and lower food insecurity on campus. If it is determined that the MSU Emergency Bursary Fund does increase demand through number of applications, the University itself must take comprehensive steps towards implementing a university-funded emergency bursary to

²² MSU. (2016, January 20). THE MCMASTER STUDENT UNION EMERGENCY BURSARY FUND. Retrieved from McMaster Students Union: <https://www.msumcmaster.ca/governance/executive-board/emergency-bursary>

²³ University Affairs, McMaster Food Security Survey , raw data, McMaster Students Union, Hamilton.

²⁴ Watkins, A. (2015, 09 15). *MSU offers emergency bursary program unrelated to OSAP*. Retrieved from The Silhouette : <https://www.thesil.ca/msu-offers-emergency-bursary-program-unrelated-to-osap>

²⁵ Ibid, 23.

²⁶ McQuigge, K (2017, March 8), Alumni Advancement (Alumni Relations & Annual Giving) Office of Alumni Advancement/McMaster Alumni Association, McMaster University

²⁷ Mac Bread Bin. Mac Bread Bin Report #1 of Term #2. Retrieved from McMaster Students Union: <https://www.msumcmaster.ca/governance/executive-board/executive-board-documents>

²⁸ OSAP, (2010), Tuition and Living Costs, Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, <https://osap.gov.on.ca/OSAPortal/en/PostsecondaryEducation/OSAP/FinancialPlanning/TuitionandLivingCosts/>

subdue an ever-growing proportion of students vying for urgent financial assistance.

Through in-depth feedback from full-time undergraduate students in the MSU Food Policy Forum held on January 13th, 2017, it was determined that the MSU Emergency Bursary was extremely beneficial towards supporting full-time undergraduate students because it provides temporary relief to students who are undergoing unanticipated expenses that poses a barrier towards academic success²⁹.

²⁹ University Affairs, McMaster Food Security Survey , raw data, McMaster Students Union, Hamilton

Accessibility

Dietary Restrictions (Cultural, Religious, Allergies, Disability, etc.)

Principle: All students regardless of income, disability, schedule, allergies, or dietary restrictions should have access to nutritious and affordable food on campus.

Concern: Comparable vegetarian and vegan options are limited.

Concern: Halal, Kosher, and other cultural dietary restrictions are provided by limited vendors on campus.

Concern: The lack of availability of Kosher food options on campus is a barrier preventing students from living in residence.

Concern: Students have expressed the lack of diverse food options on campus relating to cultural observances and holiday celebrations.

Recommendation: Hospitality Services should explore and provide a diversity of vegan and vegetarian options at fair and comparable cost to other options on campus.

Recommendation: Hospitality Services should look to provide more options for those with cultural and/or spiritual dietary restrictions at comparable and fair cost.

Recommendation: Hospitality Services should incorporate cultural food options around days of cultural and spiritual observance so students have access to appropriate food options.

McMaster University is more than an academic institution it also provides housing, food, and community to its students. As such our diversity in student population should be reflected in our diversity of food options. McMaster students come from various backgrounds and various identities and no student should be penalized for this. All students regardless of their income, disability, schedule, allergies, or dietary restrictions should have access to nutritious and affordable food.

While most vendors on campus offer at least one vegetarian option, students have raised

concern that the nutritional quality of food is not comparable to that of the “traditional” options. Additionally, the limited availability of affordable fruits and vegetables on campus makes it more difficult to maintain a vegetarian or vegan diet without compromising student health. The 2017 Food Security Survey, with over 100 respondents, indicated that 50% of students either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement “I believe that McMaster offers a wide variety of food options on campus”³⁰. Moreover, 25% of student respondents strongly agreed with the statement “I have encountered a situation at McMaster where I had adequate access to food that met my dietary restrictions”, with another 14% of students indicating agreement³¹. While more prevalent with vegetarian food options, than other dietary restrictions, ensuring that food is labelled and marketed according to any restrictions it may satisfy is of ongoing importance.

Vegetarian and vegan options meet the requirements of most diets, yet this universality in consumption is not met with proportional diversity in available options. Moving forward, Hospitality Services should explore and invest in more vegetarian and vegan options within all of its vendors. Additionally, the nutritional value of these options should not be compromised in the creation of these meals. It is necessary that the comparable nutritional value and cost of vegetarian and vegan options to existing options is taken into account when expanding available options. Furthermore, the comparative cost to students of servings of fruits and vegetables to other food groups should be considered more broadly on campus.

Similarly to vegetarian and vegan dietary options there is ongoing student concern regarding the accessibility of food on campus that meets spiritual and cultural dietary restrictions. The 2017 Food Security Survey, with over 100 respondents, indicated that 50% of students either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement “I believe that McMaster offers a wide variety of food options on campus”³². Moreover, 25% of student respondents strongly agreed with the statement “I have encountered a situation at McMaster where I had adequate access to food that met my dietary restrictions”, with another 14% of students indicating agreement³³. Additionally, student concern was brought up in regards to the comparable quality of Kosher options on campus compared to other options. Whereas most students can access fresh and/or warm meals, Kosher options are often pre-prepared, packaged and less diverse in nutritional value. Additionally, when food options meet cultural or spiritual requirements, their observance to these requirements is not always or effectively communicated, particularly kosher food options

³⁰ University Affairs, Food Security Survey, raw data, Hamilton, Ontario.

³¹ Ibid, 30.

³² Ibid, 30.

³³ Ibid, 30.

as noted by students at the Food security Forum³⁴.

Food options that meet spiritual and cultural dietary restrictions, such as halal and kosher options can be consumed by a much larger proportion of students than options that do not meet these criteria. Moving forward, Hospitality services should explore and invest in more Halal and Kosher options with in all of its vendors. The cost of making a facility halal or kosher is often a one time upfront cost and any additional cost stem from training staff and ingredients. All of which can be incorporated easily into the current structure of hospitality services. Additionally, the nutritional value of these options should not be compromised in the creation of these meals. When options are being considered it is necessary that the comparable nutritional value, cost, and quality (pre-packaged, warm, fresh, etc.) of these options to existing options is taken into account. Furthermore, the labelling and communication of food options that meet these options needs to be improved, particularly for foods that are kosher. This year kosher food on campus was only widely available in the form of sandwiches with some pre-made food options also available in Bridges. The sandwiches were only available Tuesday to Thursday after October and had limited availability during exam period³⁵. As a result of this barrier some Jewish students in focus groups indicated they did not apply to residence.

Throughout the year there a variety of cultural and spiritual observances, many of these have certain foods associated with them. However, students have expressed concern that they feel isolated from their communities because of the lack of options available on campus in recognition of these events and celebrations . Some days of celebration include but are not limited to religious holidays, new year's celebrations, days of remembrance and mourning etc.

This year, Hospitality services worked with vendors in La Piazza to incorporate Afro-Caribbean inspired food options once a week for the month of February, Black History Month. Initiatives like this should be expanded upon to celebrate and include more students on this campus. In working to achieve this Hospitality services should work with the Chaplaincy Centre, the Interfaith Issues Working Group of the President's Advisory Committee on Building an Inclusive Community, and MSU clubs in the Cultural and Religious and Social Issues divisions. Many MSU clubs exhaust their funding to provide students with meals during these days of observance³⁶. Working with these students as well as faculty and staff to recognize these holidays, celebrations, and days of observance shows a dedication to ensuring the inclusion of all members of the McMaster Community.

³⁴ University Affairs, Food Security Forum, raw data. Hamilton, Ontario.

³⁵ University Affairs, MSU Policy Conference, raw data. Hamilton, Ontario.

³⁶ Ibid, 35.

Late Night Food Options and Vending Machines

Principle: Students should have access to late night food options on campus.

Concern: Students who are on campus late at night have no access to viable meal options throughout the academic term.

Concern: Vending machines do not usually contain nutritious food.

Concern: Most vending machines only accept cash, which can prevent students from accessing food.

Recommendation: The University should extend the hours of at least one centralized food vendor to 2:00 am to cater to the need of students who stay late on campus.

Recommendation: The university should invest in providing more nutritious options in vending machines.

Recommendation: Hospitality Services should change all vending machines to accept credit, debit, and meal cards.

Students are on campus late at night for a variety of reasons including studying, completing assignments, working, volunteering, night class and much more. For the purpose of this paper, late night is defined as until 2am. This is because we know when library and food vendor hours are extended during the exam period, student interest typically stays very high until 2am and begins to decline after. Students both have to and choose to be on campus late at night and all of these students deserve access to affordable late night food options on campus.

Despite the need for late night food options, after Hospitality Services vendors close, there are no on campus options for students seeking food later at night beyond vending machines. Additionally, the options that are open later primarily offer snack food or prepackaged food, and often these are more expensive. Many students find themselves without food or with more expensive delivery based options late at night. This lack of availability disproportionately affects commuter students, students enrolled in night classes, and lower income students.

During exam periods many vendors on campus adjust their hours to accommodate the

greater number of students on campus later at night. While there are more students on campus later during these periods, many students remain on campus later at night throughout the year. As such there should exist a centralized vendor that remains open later into the night during the entire academic term. Additionally, this vendor should provide a variety of fair cost meals to students and not just snack food or more expensive options.

As of now, vending machines are usually the most accessible option for all hours food on campus. According to the MSU Food Security forum, students usually rely on these machines for food options late at night when vendors are closed. However, these machines offer limited or even no nutritious food³⁷. Vending machines in MUSC or Mills Library, locations where vending machines are often used, offer chips, candy and some granola bars. While the food offered are suitable for snacks, the options offered are problematic when it serves to be the only food option on campus. Further, the lack of accessibility to food is exacerbated when the vending machines only accept cash when some students often only either carry debit, credit or meal cards.

McMaster students would like to see the university invest in providing nutritious food options in vending machines. Students have noticed that McMaster has recently offered upgrades in vending machines, such as an espresso machine in LR Wilson, and believe that the university should focus their efforts in offering more nutritious options. Other universities, such as Western University, have implemented the Healthier4U initiatives to offer prepackaged granola bars³⁸. While the Ministry of Education has implemented their Eat Right Ontario - School Food and Beverage Policy which restricts the amount of unhealthy food and promotes nutritious options offered in vending machines in public schools³⁹. McMaster University should follow a similar model to elementary schools in choosing the food options for vending machines. Some examples from this model include the requirement that trans fat of food do not exceed 2% of the food's total fat content⁴⁰. Apart from investing in more nutritious food options, the university should continue to implement vending machines which also accept debit and credit. Providing debit, credit or meal card payment options will allow to make these machines more accessible to students.

³⁷ University Affairs, McMaster Food Security Survey , raw data, Hamilton, Ontario.

³⁸ 1. Sharma S. Quick snacks at Western getting healthier [Internet]. Londoner. [cited 2017 Mar 8]. Available from: <http://www.thelondoner.ca/2013/08/21/quick-snacks-at-western-university-getting-healthier>

³⁹ Ontario Ministry of Education. (2010). P/PM 150: School food and beverage policy. Retrieved from: www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/ppm150.pdf

⁴⁰ Ibid, 39.

Local Food Sourcing

Principle: In line with sustainability efforts of the university, local food options should be prioritized and offered on campus.

Principle: Students should have access to locally sourced food throughout the year.

Principle: Locally sourced food should be offered at a comparable price to alternatives.

Concern: The availability of local food during winter months is scarce, and poses barriers for students wishing to commit to local food.

Concern: Locally sourced ingredients are sometimes more expensive and may result in higher prices of foods on campus.

Concern: There is no permanent space for a locally sourced food provider on campus.

Recommendation: The Food Security Analyst in McMaster Hospitality Services should review and evaluate food purchasing practices and suppliers of produce to identify areas for improvement for local food prioritization.

Recommendation: McMaster Hospitality Services should work towards full integration of locally sourced produce where possible.

Recommendation: McMaster University should prioritize space for a permanent grocery store with a focus on locally sourced produce, offered at an affordable price.

Recommendation: In the interim, McMaster University should prioritize and support a permanent space for Mac Farmstand.

With the increased awareness and attention towards environmental, economic and nutritional benefits of local food, it is important that McMaster University strives to integrate and encourage locally sourced foods on campus. The main purpose of this is to establish rural-urban linkages and increase consumer awareness of the nutritional and environmental benefits of supporting our local growers and sustainable food systems. University of British Columbia (UBC) is a prime example of exerting collaborative research efforts to improve their food system by sourcing locally grown ingredients. In 2010/11,

their main food providers, UBC Food Services and AMS Food and Beverage Department, expensed 48% of their budget towards foods that were locally grown, raised or processed within 150 miles of campus.⁴¹ University campuses should continue, if not begin, the movement towards integrating and encouraging initiatives that are founded on strengthening our relationships with local producers.

Some of our challenges are that locally sourced produce isn't always available year-round in Ontario, especially due to less optimum climatic conditions. The scarcity of foods available during the winter months prevents accessibility for students and our main food providers during the fiscal year in attaining local ingredients or products. In addition, locally sourced ingredients are sometimes more expensive than conventionally available alternatives. However, this is largely dependent on a number of variables including but limited to the region of purchase, quantity of the purchase and consumer demand.

The online survey distributed amongst McMaster students identifies the need to embed a commitment to the development and support of local food initiatives on campus. When asked if they believe the University should make local food options on campus a priority, there was an overwhelming 75% of students who agreed.⁴² Although there is a demonstrated interest and strong agreeance in having local choices available on campus, the challenges Our main food providers should be able to provide information regarding the distance the products have travelled and the original source of all ingredients. This will set informed targets for increasing the awareness and education component of local food purchases.

⁴¹ Londono, Patricia. "University of British Columbia OP-6: Food and Beverage Purchasing." *AASHE-STARS*. N.p., 02 Aug. 2011. Web. 04 Mar. 2017.

⁴² University Affairs, McMaster Food Security Survey , raw data, Hamilton, Ontario.

Educating Students on Combatting Food Insecurity

Principle: McMaster students should be knowledgeable about how a healthy diet can impact overall health and academic success.

Principle: McMaster students should be able to focus on their academic career without any barriers due to lack of nutritious and affordable food.

Concern: Many students do not know how to efficiently and properly prepare food for themselves when living on and around campus.

Concern: Most students are unaware of how to effectively save money on the food they buy and how to minimize food waste.

Concern: It has become normalized that students can't afford food and have begun to accept this as a reality of post-secondary education.

Concern: Students do not know how to adequately plan their finances around food amongst other necessities like housing and courseware.

Concern: Many students are not aware that food security is a prevalent issue among students and as a result, they do not self-identify as food insecure even if they are.

Recommendation: Appropriate food resources that improve students' food security like financial aid and dieticians should be adequately promoted.

Recommendation: Mac Money Centre should run educational campaigns to educate students about food security and proper strategies to combat food insecurity throughout their university lives.

Recommendation: The McMaster Off-Campus Resource Centre should provide a list of areas where student discounts are available (eg. Thursdays 20% at Shoppers Drug mart, Tuesdays 10% off at Metro, Fortinos, and Food Basics).

Recommendation: The University should conduct workshops that teach students how to cook and how to minimize food waste.

Having a nutritious diet to sustain daily activities is essential in growing body. Food

choices offered on campus and what students choose to eat on campus is an important element in their development. Many students come to university with no past experience of budgeting for meals or are taught about how a poor diet can lead to poor health. Often times, students are unaware of the hidden ingredient contents that are masked in processed foods that students consume daily. For example, Pizza Pizza's standard Walk-In Pepperoni Pizza has 650 kcals, 10g of sugar, and 520mg of sodium just per slice which can add up unknowingly to their daily intake⁴³. A survey done in partnership with five Canadian universities reported that 23.7% of food-insecure students attributed their physical health diminishing because of food insecurity and 20.1% reported their mental health was impacted⁴⁴. A Harvard Medical Doctor has also stated that a proper diet is crucial for substantial creation of neurotransmitters like serotonin, a chemical used by your brain for daily functions, and malnutrition can be directly attributed to poor brain chemical imbalances⁴⁵. A healthy diet is crucial for a student's well being and will directly affect their performance on their academic life. Educating students on healthy eating instead of the most economical options of eating will help prevent food related health risks and ensure strong academic performance. Many students are not aware of this prior to university and therefore the university must help students learn the appropriate knowledge to maintain a healthy diet and adequately budget for their meals.

With costs for living expenses and the cost of tuition rising gradually, students are struggling to concentrate on their academic studies without having the looming concerns of financial stability. With that in mind, students should be able to prioritize their education over other aspects of their lives and shouldn't make many sacrifices to put their education first. A large portion of a student's life is in what they consume, which creates an impact on their mental and physical capabilities; capabilities that are essential for academic progress throughout university. Thus, a student's diet should be aligned with a viable healthier option that is affordable to students to obtain the necessary daily nutrients needed to excel in their academic careers.

Students come to university with the priority of obtaining a higher education and may easily not prioritize food preparation as a crucial skill when living on or around campus. Only two residences out of the 12 on campus offer separate kitchens for students

⁴³ "Nutrition." Pizza Pizza. Accessed February 22, 2017. <http://www.pizzapizza.ca/nutrition/>.

⁴⁴ Silverthorn, D. (2016). Hungry for knowledge: Assessing the prevalence of student food insecurity on five Canadian campuses. Toronto: Meal Exchange. Retrieved from: <http://mealexchange.com>

⁴⁵ Eva Selhub Contributing Editor, "Nutritional psychiatry: Your brain on food," Harvard Health Blog, November 17, 2015, , accessed February 22, 2017, <http://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/nutritional-psychiatry-your-brain-on-food-201511168626>.

and the remaining offer a communal kitchen for each floor⁴⁶. This itself allows little accessibility for students to prepare their own food on top of the fact that many students may not have been taught food preparation prior to university. Students are also presented a meal plan card when living on campus which obligates them to rely on on-campus food options when it comes to feeding themselves. Meal cards also limits what amount of money crosses over at the end of the academic year, further pressuring students not to waste money invested in a meal card. Based on a national survey done by the American College Health Association, media influences and availability of processed foods were contributing factors towards students choosing to buy food over preparing nutritious food for themselves⁴⁷.

There has been a lack of education for students on how to save money on food purchases they make. Often times students buy prepared foods or take-out for convenience which is more expensive than buying groceries to prepare their own meals. A survey distributed amongst McMaster students about food security, 23% said they borrowed money from friends and family, 15% said they applied for a job, and 19% indicated they used their credit card⁴⁸. This is a clear indication that many McMaster students currently face financial insecurities that prevent them from feeding themselves properly. This issue can be partially attributed to poor financial planning of students, and the inability to maximize their budgets effectively.

With food insecurity being a dominant issue throughout Canadian universities and within McMaster, many students are normalizing the idea that having food security problems is a common and unavoidable burden in student life. A survey distributed amongst several Canadian universities identified that normalizing the situation in regards to poor food security was one of the most common coping mechanisms of students⁴⁹. Based on the results of the survey distributed to McMaster students, 25% of respondents strongly agreed that it is a norm to struggle affording food as a student and 22% agreed⁵⁰. It's clearly evident that normalizing poor food security as a student is a widespread Canadian problem. With such strong indications of students normalizing this problem, many students will stop addressing the need for balancing food security with financial, physical, and mental health.

⁴⁶ "Residence & Housing | McMaster University – Future Students," McMaster University Future Students, , accessed February 22, 2017, <http://future.mcmaster.ca/student/residence/>.

⁴⁷ Mec Valle, "How a healthy diet can seriously benefit college students," Daily Titan, February 27, 2012, , accessed February 22, 2017, <https://dailytitan.com/2012/02/how-a-healthy-diet-can-seriously-benefit-college-students/>.

⁴⁸ University Affairs, McMaster Food Security Survey , raw data, McMaster Students Union, Hamilton.

⁴⁹ Silverthorn, D. (2016).

⁵⁰ University Affairs, McMaster Food Security Survey , raw data, McMaster Students Union, Hamilton.

Ontario's education curriculum currently does not require mandatory financial literacy courses to educate students on life financials which poses a gap in learning for students who will struggle in the real world because they lack the basic foundation in transitioning from high school to the real world. Even university students face problems when filing taxes or even understanding the basic procedures to apply for a loan. This is because there is a learning gap in the classroom and understanding the basic money management principles that students need to learn.. Students who have just transitioned into university need to understand how to prioritize and spend their budget accordingly so that they are able to sustain their normal lifestyle without incurring unexpected costs which can lead them to become financially insecure. Raising awareness on resources such as buying used books from upper years or researching on adequate housing websites to finding affordable housing can prove to be a sufficient means to effectively spend their budget that allows enough discretionary income to cushion any unforeseen costs in the future.

Through more campaign awareness and reaching out to first year students Mac's Money Centre can help students save money through educating financially struggling students to choose discount food retailers, find food coupons, and also stretching leftovers so as to not contribute to food wastage which in turn will cost students money overtime to replenish food they could have eaten instead.

Residence Life and Society of Off-Campus Students could partner together to better promote and raise awareness of existing financial literacy workshops that are offered by Mac's Money Centre. This is especially crucial in developing life skills for students on paying for tuition in their first year (OSAP, bursaries, scholarships, grants, government aid resources, etc.) , how to live on a fixed budget, finding ways how to maximize that fixed budget throughout the year, and how to repay debts after post-secondary education⁵¹. Since these associations are the first-contacts for first years, promoting existing financial workshop through these organizations will help educate students on how to efficiently allocate their budgets during their time at McMaster.

Students should be aware of when there are deals available on food offered by Hospitality services. From daily specials to drops in food prices before food is thrown out, students should be notified when they can save money on campus food. McMaster has digital advertising monitors on many areas of campus and these should be utilized to a great extent to inform students on available discounts. Social media marketing is another

⁵¹ "Mac's Money Centre" McMaster University Student Affairs. Accessed February 22, 2017. <http://money.mcmaster.ca/>.

viable option that can advertise to students through online platforms about food discounts.

There are a variety of off-campus food vendors that specifically offer discounts to students. These sites vary in location and therefore may only be known to some students about their student discounts. The Off-Campus Resource Centre in collaboration with the Mac Money Centre should have a comprehensive list available to students posted on their website to raise awareness on all student discounts offered by off-campus food vendors.

Ingredient Transparency

Principle: All students at McMaster University should have complete access to all allergy, nutritional, and production information in regards to campus food.

Concern: Allergy information is not always available on menus at food establishments on campus.

Concern: Nutritional information is available online, however, it is not well-advertised and readily available for students.

Concern: Production information and food-sourcing information is unavailable both online and in-store.

Recommendation: McMaster Hospitality Services should make note of allergy information on every menu.

Recommendation: McMaster Hospitality Services should advertise that nutritional information of their products is online at their locations.

Recommendation: The Food Security Analyst in McMaster Hospitality Services should work to centralize all nutritional information for food offered on campus, including Paradise catering, as well as improve transparency in food production and sourcing information.

Ingredient transparency is very important at on-campus food locations because of potential allergens and the growing concern among students of food sources. It is a concern that allergy information is not always available on menus at on-campus food locations which could lead to illness among those with allergies. To prevent such situations, it is recommended that McMaster Hospitality Services make all allergy-information completely transparent on every menu at their food locations.

Similar to transparent allergy warnings, it is important that food locations provide nutritional, production, and food-sourcing information. Nutrition information is regulated by the government of Canada and must include calorie information, ingredients, 13 core nutrient information, and the percent daily value of these nutrients⁵². In a recent survey

⁵² "Nutrition Labelling - Food And Nutrition - Health Canada". 2015. *Hc-Sc.Gc.Ca*. <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn->

conducted by the 2016-2017 University Affairs Committee and the MSU service Mac Bread Bin, it was found that 81% of students consider the nutritional value of on-campus foods when purchasing; hence, the importance of transparent nutritional information⁵³. This information is available through the Hospitality website; however, it is not well-advertised. McMaster Hospitality Services should start to advertise that this information is available online in order to meet student needs. Similarly, this information should be available at the locations in the form of well-advertised pamphlets, rather than nutritional information directly on the menu as this could be triggering for students with experience with eating disorders. Ultimately, it is essential that students have the option to decide whether or not to view the nutritional information on location to ensure they are able to make informed decisions about their meals.

The same survey also found that 76% of students believe that the University should make local food options a priority⁵⁴. Currently, the production and food-sourcing information of the food used at Hospitality locations at McMaster is unavailable. This uncertainty in food-sourcing is concerning and should be completely transparent to coincide with student needs and the changing on-campus ideals of providing local food options. A new position under McMaster Hospitality Services is a reasonable solution that would greatly improve transparency and would allow for accountability of the service. This position would include the management of ingredient transparency and ensuring the nutritional information is up to date. The addition of this position would reduce the concerns regarding transparency and uncertainty of food production and sourcing.

[an/label-etiquet/nutrition/index-eng.php](#).

⁵³ University Affairs, McMaster Food Security Survey , raw data, McMaster Students Union, Hamilton.

⁵⁴ University Affairs, McMaster Food Security Survey , raw data, McMaster Students Union, Hamilton

Climate Survey

Principle: The university should make efforts to remain updated on the current state of student issues.

Concern: The university currently does not collect data on the food insecurity issues that students face.

Recommendation: The Food Security Analyst within Hospitality Services should be tasked with conducting, analyzing and implementing a climate survey to evaluate topics of food insecurity.

In order to best address the issues of McMaster students, the university must make stronger efforts to ensure they remain updated on student issues and gather feedback on progress that has been made. This climate survey will provide analytical data from student feedback to evaluate the benefits of changes that have been made. Similar to the 2016 survey by the University Affairs Committee, the climate survey should cover all issues surrounding food insecurity and aim to engage in student feedback.

The climate survey should be conducted every three years to ensure that all McMaster undergraduate students have the opportunity to participate and the data is the most representative of the population. As some students may graduate after three years, it is appropriate to assume that a three year period will provide an adequate amount of time for a new population of students to fill out the survey.

The climate survey should include a broad range of topics surrounding food insecurity and how this impacts students. Examples of topics that should be included are as follows:

- Prices of food on campus
- Meal plan satisfaction
- Food options available on campus
- Ingredient/food preparation transparency
- Accessible food for dietary restrictions
- Food waste on campus
- Local food options on campus
- Effectiveness of educational campaigns
- Overall student awareness of food insecurity

Policy Statement

Whereas: All students should have access to affordable and healthy food on campus.

And Whereas: McMaster University should be making efforts to reduce food waste.

And Whereas: Students should be able to make informed decisions on their food purchases.

And Whereas: Student groups should have access to catering options that are reasonably priced and address all dietary and cultural restrictions.

And Whereas: The mandatory meal plan should not be a financial barrier for students to live in residence.

And Whereas: The mandatory meal plan should ensure food security for all students living on residence.

And Whereas: Students who live off campus should have access to a more economical meal plan.

And Whereas: Students should have adequate financial support with the rising costs of tuition and living expenses that places a burden on academic performance.

And Whereas: All students regardless of income, disability, schedule, allergies, or dietary restrictions should have access to nutritious and affordable food on campus.

And Whereas: Students should have access to late night food options on campus.

And Whereas: In line with sustainability efforts of the university, local food options should be prioritized and offered on campus.

And Whereas: Students should have access to locally sourced food throughout the year.

And Whereas: Locally sourced food should be offered at a comparable price to alternatives.

And Whereas: McMaster students should be knowledgeable about how a healthy diet can

impact overall health and academic success.

And Whereas: McMaster students should be able to focus on their academic career without any barriers due to lack of nutritious and affordable food.

And Whereas: All students at McMaster University should have complete access to all allergy, nutritional, and production information in regards to campus food.

And Whereas: The university should make efforts to remain updated on the current state of student issues.

Be It Resolved That: McMaster Hospitality Services should ensure that all food prices are readily available and easy to identify for students.

And Be It Further Resolved That (BIFRT): McMaster Hospitality Services should lower the prices of healthier food options to promote a healthier lifestyle at a comparable price to alternatives.

BIFRT: McMaster Hospitality Services should offer a wider range of food prices to include nutritional options at various price points.

BIFRT: McMaster Hospitality Services should hire a new Food Security Analyst to be tasked with developing strategies to lower food prices on campus.

BIFRT: McMaster Hospitality Services should provide sales towards the end of the day on foods that would otherwise be thrown out to reduce food waste and improve food affordability.

BIFRT: McMaster University should ensure that Paradise catering offers food that addresses all dietary and cultural restrictions.

BIFRT: In the case that Paradise catering is unable to offer food that addresses dietary and cultural restrictions, McMaster University should allow student groups to cater with outside vendors that are able to meet these restrictions.

BIFRT: McMaster University should ensure that Paradise catering provides an appropriate amount of food that reflects the market value.

BIFRT: McMaster University should work with Paradise catering to ensure that student feedback is collected and taken into consideration in order to ensure student concerns are

identified and addressed.

BIFRT: McMaster University should amend the agreement with Paradise Catering to eliminate the monopoly of food catering options on campus for students and student groups.

BIFRT: In the interim, McMaster University should ensure that all new buildings that are built onwards of April 2017 should be exempt from the Paradise Catering monopoly agreement.

BIFRT: In the interim, McMaster University should allow all small student groups to be exempt from the Paradise catering monopoly.

BIFRT: In the interim, McMaster University should allow for outside catering services in primary student spaces.

BIFRT: Hospitality Services should provide the option for students to make two payment installments for their meal plan.

BIFRT: The Food Security Analyst in McMaster Hospitality Services should be tasked with developing an affordable meal plan that reflects the costs of food on campus for a full year, based on student feedback.

BIFRT: The Reduced Meal Plan should be expanded to be offered to all students living in residence.

BIFRT: McMaster University should create a bursary fund to assist students in accessing the mandatory on-campus meal plan.

BIFRT: McMaster University should provide a discounted option for the mandatory on-campus meal plan for low-income students.

BIFRT: McMaster University should open campus eateries during Welcome Week plan.

BIFRT: McMaster University should advertise that the the Welcome Week Meal Plan is an optional agreement and that students can still purchase food from vendors using their regular meal plan during Welcome Week.

BIFRT: Hospitality Services should lower the initial deposit for the Freedom plan to \$50 and increase the discount percentage to 10% for Off-Campus students.

BIFRT: Hospitality Services should provide an option for first year students living off campus to access a meal plan that is comparable to the on-campus meal plan.

BIFRT: McMaster University should provide a discounted option for the off-campus first year meal plan for low-income students.

BIFRT: In the interim, the University should match the MSU contribution towards the MSU Emergency Bursary Fund of \$10,000 as an alternative means to provide short-term financial assistance to students that can be used towards relieving serious unexpected financial problems.

BIFRT: Ultimately, the University should take full responsibility for the \$20,000 of the Emergency Bursary Fund to address the rising demand from students not the MSU.

BIFRT: Hospitality Services should explore and provide a diversity of vegan and vegetarian options at fair and comparable cost to other options on campus.

BIFRT: Hospitality Services should look to provide more options for those with cultural and/or spiritual dietary restrictions at comparable and fair cost.

BIFRT: Hospitality Services should incorporate cultural food options around days of cultural and spiritual observance so students have access to appropriate food options.

BIFRT: The University should extend the hours of at least one centralized food vendor to 2:00 am to cater to the need of students who stay late on campus.

BIFRT: The university should invest in providing more nutritious options in vending machines.

BIFRT: Hospitality Services should change all vending machines to accept credit, debit, and meal cards.

BIFRT: The Food Security Analyst in McMaster Hospitality Services should review and evaluate food purchasing practices and suppliers of produce to identify areas for improvement for local food prioritization.

BIFRT: McMaster Hospitality Services should work towards full integration of locally sourced produce where possible.

BIFRT: McMaster University should prioritize space for a permanent grocery store with a

focus on locally sourced produce, offered at an affordable price.

BIFRT: In the interim, McMaster University should prioritize and support a permanent space for Mac Farmstand.

BIFRT: Appropriate food resources that improve students' food security like financial aid and dieticians should be adequately promoted.

BIFRT: Mac Money Centre should run educational campaigns to educate students about food security and proper strategies to combat food insecurity throughout their university lives.

BIFRT: The McMaster Off-Campus Resource Centre should provide a list of areas where student discounts are available (eg. Thursdays 20% at Shoppers Drug mart, Tuesdays 10% off at Metro, Fortinos, and Food Basics).

BIFRT: The University should conduct workshops that teach students how to cook and how to minimize food waste.

BIFRT: McMaster Hospitality Services should make note of allergy information on every menu.

BIFRT: McMaster Hospitality Services should advertise that nutritional information of their products is online at their locations.

BIFRT: The Food Security Analyst in McMaster Hospitality Services should work to centralize all nutritional information for food offered on campus, including Paradise catering, as well as improve transparency in food production and sourcing information.

BIFRT: The Food Security Analyst within Hospitality Services should be tasked with conducting, analyzing and implementing a climate survey to evaluate topics of food insecurity.