

## Executive Summary

My name is Aditi, and I am a senior at Michigan State University (MSU) studying Comparative Cultures and Politics. Similar to many new college students, in my first year at MSU, I had no idea what I wanted to study. I never felt particularly passionate about most career paths, and I felt stuck. During my second semester at MSU, however, I took a course on international food insecurity and felt compelled to research more. Food has always been a constant in my life. Growing up in a Desi American house, food was at the core of my family's identity. Nothing bonded me to my culture more than Indian food. So, when I learned about food insecurity, particularly as it affects my peers on campus, I wanted to do something. At MSU, I now work extensively with food insecurity on my campus and in my community; I am the co-founder and co-president of the Spartan Food Security Council (SFSC), MSU's first and only student group fighting student hunger.

During Phase 2 of the FIELD Fellowship, I interned at Produce Packaging Inc. in Cleveland, Ohio. Throughout this experience, I had an opportunity to explore parts of the Midwestern produce industry and its intricacies. This deeper look into my local food system inspired me to choose a project close to my home – SFSC. Since its inception in October 2021, we have been tackling issues related to local student food insecurity, and I wanted to bring awareness to our council's successes and possible ways to replicate this concept at different campuses. The organization's mission statement has changed over the years, but at our core the goal is still the same: to feed our community well. We have worked with local organizations, student groups, and institutional leaders to bring awareness to the issue and implement solutions, and over the course of two years SFSC has become a key organization in the fight against food insecurity. During these two years, I additionally defended my Undergraduate Honors Thesis on student food insecurity, became a FIELD Fellow with The Farmlink Project, and introduced the Hunger Free Campus Bill to the state of Michigan. SFSC has given me the opportunity to work with students and bring actual change to my community, and I hope to inspire others through my work.

So, I created a step-by-step kit where students can learn how to create a food council on their campus, think critically about their community's food insecurity issues, and individually address them. By empowering students to create local change within their community, food councils can help grow our next generation of leaders in the food system. Needs Assessment

College food insecurity is widespread across the United States. According to Swipe Out Hunger, 1 in 3 students nationally are food insecure. And while food insecurity does not discriminate, marginalized community groups are more likely to be food insecure than

their counterparts. There are a number of factors that contribute to food insecurity among college students, including:

- Rising tuition and housing costs: The cost of college has been rising steadily for decades, while wages have stagnated. This means that many students are struggling to afford basic necessities like food and housing.
- Financial independence: Many college students are financially independent from their parents and are responsible for paying for their own expenses. This can be a challenge, especially for students who are working part-time jobs to help cover their costs.
- Accessibility to food: Not all college students have access to affordable, nutritious food. Some campuses are located in food deserts, where there are few grocery stores or restaurants that sell healthy food. Other campuses have limited dining hall hours or expensive meal plans.

At MSU, I saw food insecurity amongst my peers and how damaging hunger can be on one's education. SFSC was founded to help find solutions to student food insecurity and to make change within our community. Food insecurity can have a significant impact on college students' academic success, health, and well-being. Students who are food insecure are more likely to experience stress, anxiety, and depression. They are also more likely to have difficulty concentrating in class and performing well on exams. Thus, it is critical to provide resources for students.

## **Solution Proposal**

The purpose of the kit is to inspire and empower students across the United States to create localized food system change. It guides students to think about their campus community and its unique issues. The kit first begins with the student considering their own community. Questions such as “what does community mean to you” and “who is part of your community” make the student think deeper about those living around them. There are also tips to creating a food council, ideas for projects, and a FAQ section. Ultimately, the kit is a launching pad for students to think about their community more seriously and inspire them to create change.

The kit is also flexible, meaning it is not only available for students. Professors and administrators can also access the kit. For example, if a professor wants to incorporate civic engagement into their curriculum, this kit provides ideas for all. The goal is to send the kit out to students, professors, and administrators in hopes of finding student ambassadors at different universities. These student ambassadors can create food councils and create a network across the country.

## Logic Model(s)

Problem Statement			
College students across the country are facing food insecurity issues which greatly affects their ability to pursue an education.			
Solution Statement: Address the specificities of location-based food insecurity rates on college campuses and create a standard replicable "Food Council" kit.			
Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
<p>Farmlink Staff and Swipe Out Hunger Staff support to help me get access to Farmlink/Swipe Websites and Email Newsletters to disseminate Kits.</p> <p>Data and Statistics to back my claims on national and localized food insecurity on college campuses.</p> <p>Design-focused websites and software like Canva to design one-pagers.</p>	<p>Create one-pagers for the kit with different topics (the first one for example is question-based for students to think critically about their communities and using MSU as an example)</p> <p>Put together the downloadable kit into one "package."</p> <p>Dissemination to Farmlink website/newsletter, Swipe website/newsletter, other forms of communication (Maybe even reaching out to different colleges around the nation with this kit in hopes of implementation)</p>	<p>Institutional support for nationwide Food Council implementation.</p> <p>Creation of downloadable kit for students to utilize.</p>	<p>Short term - Students can learn more about the possibilities of a campus food security council, at the very least they can begin thinking critically about food insecurity within their own communities.</p> <p>Intermediate - Perhaps a handful of Food Security Councils have been created across the nation.</p> <p>Long term - Ultimately, more and more Food Security Councils are created around the nation. By then, a larger discourse fighting college student hunger is created for students by students!!</p>
Assumptions			External Factors
<p>I assume Farmlink, Swipe, and educational institutions will help disseminate this information.</p> <p>I assume that students will use the kit proactively as a form of education and leadership.</p>			<p>The kit already considers the nuances and complexities of every individual campus, so it is important to be careful about generalizations.</p>

## Results

The kit is ready to be distributed and sent to students, professors, and administrators. The plan is to create a mailing list, send out the kit, and help facilitate questions about the kit. As I receive responses, I will help students build up their councils. The long-term goal is to create a network of campus food councils across the country to once and for all end college student hunger.

## Conclusion

By sharing the kit with students you know, we are raising the next leaders in the food system. Benefits to creating a food council include large-scale networking, leadership and teamwork skills, and event planning experience. Campus food councils are essential to ensuring that all students have the opportunity to succeed.