

Green Fund Project Final Report

This report may be published on the SIU Sustainability website.

Name of person(s) completing report: **Rebecca Gonnering**
Identify if the person completing report is a student, faculty, and/or staff: **Staff**
Department: **Student Health Services, Wellness and Health Promotion Services**
Contact Phone and email address: **Phone: (618)453-4429, Email: Rebecca.gonnering@siu.edu**
Faculty Advisor (if applicable): **N/A**
Project Title: **Swipe Out Hunger SIU**
Project ID #: **19SP104**
Award Date: **4/30/2019**
Completion Date: **5/1/2020**
Total Funds Used: **\$750, the total amount of dispersed funds**

1. Provide a summary of your project/project experience.

Swipe out Hunger (SOH) is a leading non-profit that addresses food insecurity among college students in the United States. SOH does this by advising colleges and universities on the development and implementation of “Swipe Drive” programs which enable students with extra meal swipes to donate them to their peers. Green Fund grant funds were utilized to support the creation of a Swipe Drive program at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, called *Swipe Out Hunger SIU*. The Swipe Out Hunger SIU program can be divided into four distinct phases: 1) collection of meal swipe donations, 2) determination of eligibility to receive donated meal swipes, 3) distribution of meal swipe donations to eligible students, and 4) evaluation of program impact on student success and well-being.

Collection:

In September of 2019, Wellness and Health Promotion Services and the Saluki Food Pantry hosted a week-long “Swipe Drive” outside Lentz and Trueblood dining halls. Students were asked if they were interested in supporting classmates experiencing food insecurity and were informed of the program structure and goals. Only students with an active Anytime Meal Plan and unused guest meal passes were eligible to donate to the program. Eligible students could donate up to four of their six guest meal passes to the program. Students that were interested in donating swipes had their student ID card scanned through a card reader and the designated number of swipes removed from their account. The donated wiperes were then held in a virtual meal plan that was overseen by the Saluki Food Pantry. Within one week, the Swipe Out Hunger SIU program collected 614 donated meal swipes from 295 students.

Eligibility and Distribution:

Beginning in November 2019, donated meal swipes were awarded to eligible students through the Saluki Food Pantry. Students’ eligible to receive meal swipes were required to 1) be currently enrolled SIU students and 2) not have a current meal plan. Students that met eligibility requirements completed a short Saluki Food Pantry application (see appendix 1) in which they indicated their interest in receiving free meal swipes and agreed to participate in an evaluation survey at the completion of the program. Once the form was processed, students were awarded up to three meals per month to their student ID card. Awarded swipes were available for use in the dining halls

within 72 hours of award. Students that indicated continued need were encouraged to return to the Saluki Food Pantry to receive additional meal swipes each month. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Swipe Out Hunger SIU was unable to continue providing food assistance to students through the end of the grant period.

Swipe Out Hunger SIU was suspended in March 2020. At the time of program suspension, Swipe Out Hunger SIU provided 387 meals to SIU students in need. 227 meal swipes remained unused and were returned to University Housing. To offset this loss, Wellness and Health Promotion Services reallocated the remaining \$246.02 of Green Fund Grant monies to the Saluki Food Pantry to assist with their pandemic emergency food assistance efforts.

Evaluation:

In April of 2020, a total of 50 program participants were surveyed on their experience with Swipe Out Hunger SIU. Survey invitations (see appendix 2) were sent to all participants' university email accounts with an anonymous link to the survey. Once 50 completed surveys were received, the survey closed and data analysis began.

Respondents were surveyed on basic demographic information as well as asked to reflect on how the program impacted their life and improved their overall wellbeing. Students were compensated for survey completion with a \$10 Amazon gift card. Survey results indicate students felt that the program improved their overall health and wellbeing as well as their ability to participate in academic life.

2. Provide a summary of your results (environmental, social, and/or economic) including quantifiable data as appropriate (ex. # of individuals reached, lbs. diverted from landfill, energy saved, etc.).

Economic results:

“There are many students struggling with food even without the COVID-19 problem, people struggle and life is hard. The Swipe Out Hunger makes a difference and changed my life.” - Program participant

Survey data suggests that program participants were predominately from marginalized student populations. Results indicate high levels of reported use among students of color (76%), LGBTQ+ identified students (22%) and first generation students (36%). This is not surprising as previous research has demonstrated that these student populations may experience a higher level economic need.

Survey results also indicate that program participants may have experienced financial concerns prior to enrolling in college. For example, 46 percent of respondents indicated they received free or reduced price lunch in grades K-12 and 44 percent of respondents indicated they receive Pell grants to pay for college. Six percent of respondents indicated that they are currently experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity. Additionally, 33 of the 50 survey respondents stated they did not receive enough swipes to meet their needs. These findings support a 2016 study that examined food security status of students attending universities in Illinois. This study found that the largest percentage of student participants attended SIU (Morris, Smith, Davis, & Null, 2016).

Social results:

Social findings can be divided into two categories: 1) Impact on student success and 2) impact on student health and wellbeing.

Impact on student success:

“I am able to focus more in class and exams because I am able to eat more.” - Program participant

Results suggest that participants’ academic performance improved while taking part in the food support program. Participants reported that they attend classes more often (28%), and felt that they performed better on exams and tests (28%). Participants also stated that having access to free meals helped them feel a sense of comfort and support going into finals week (26%). These results support previous findings that indicate food insecurity is a major cause on academic disruption (Dubick, Mathews, percent Cady, 2016). Supplemental food programs such as Swipe Out Hunger SIU may work to reduce academic disruption and assist in the retention of low income students.

Impact on student health and wellbeing

“I’m less stressed and eat more than one meal a day. Also I don’t forget to eat more often.” - Program participant

Participants indicated that receiving no-cost meals improved their overall health and wellbeing. Students reported several improvements to their health including eating more regularly (60%), eating more healthy meals (44%), and feeling that their physical health improved (34%). Additionally, participants reported that their emotional health was positively impacted.

Students indicated that they felt less stress and anxiety (62%) and felt an improvement in their overall wellbeing (54%). These results are not surprising as financial problems are routinely cited as a significant source of stress for college students (ACHA-NCHA, 2019). Students also reported spending more time with friends at meal time (54%), and a new sense that the university environment was supportive to students like them (62%).

3. Summarize how your project promoted the Green Fee/Sustainability on campus including, but not limited to, flyers created, screenshots of website, signage, etc. Please include website links, if applicable. (Reminder: you are required to promote your project using at least 2 items from the awardee website promotion list.)

Promotion for Swipe Out Hunger SIU is best divided into two parts. The first round of promotion was to advertise the Swipe Out Hunger SIU swipe drive which was held in September 2019. Flyers (see appendix 3) were created and distributed to campus partners, posted in prominent locations around campus, and smaller flyers were used at tabling events. Additionally, the drive was marketed using all Xibo TVs around campus and through social media (see appendix 4). All materials linked to the custom-built Swipe

Out Hunger SIU website created by SHS marketing (<https://wellness.siu.edu/swipe-out-hunger/>). These efforts led up to the four day drive which took place at Trueblood and Lentz. The table materials for the drive were bold and eye-catching to encourage student engagement. All materials used showed the Green Fund Marker which led to many conversations with students about the Green Fee in action on campus.

The second round of promotion advertised the availability of swipes in the Saluki Food Pantry. The website was used for this in addition to flyers, Xibo, and social media. In an effort to reduce flyer waste and allow for discretion in help-seeking, we used part of the budget to purchase business cards (see appendix 5). These were distributed to campus partners to be placed in an accessible spot for students. We ordered enough business cards to sustain the program for at least one more cycle and also purchased a branded table cloth for our tabling events.

4. Provide evidence of how you used the Green Fund Marker in your project.

Printed materials, signs, and digital media used the Green Fund Marker (see appendix 6).

5. Is there anything you would do differently if you were to do a similar project in the future? If so, please describe.

Improvements could be made in the future to increase program efficiency and improve user experience. For example, program participants stated that requiring users to go to the Saluki Food Pantry to apply imposed a barrier for students. Students have alternating schedules and the Food Pantry has limited hours. Therefore, several participants stated that it was difficult to get to the Saluki Food Pantry during their hours of operation. Additionally, some participants indicated that they lacked transportation. Placing the Saluki Food Pantry application online could mitigate this barrier and make the program more accessible to students.

Similarly, students stated that the process of receiving their meal swipes imposed unintended barriers. Students stated that having to return to the pantry each month to receive additional meal swipes was inconvenient and time-consuming. Students also stated that the length of time between application for swipes and receipt of swipes for use (typically 48-72 hours) imposed a barrier. Both of these issues could be improved in the future by creating an online process to apply for and receive swipes. This would eliminate the need for students to return to the Saluki Food Pantry for additional swipes and increase their access to food.

6. Provide as an attachment to the email (see email address below) a minimum of 5 digital images. A minimum of one of the five images should include a person. Images should be of high a quality as possible and be attached in jpg format, if available. Images will be used to promote interest in sustainability projects on campus and may be used on our website and in other promotional material. These can be photos of the progress of the project or the completed project. Provide captions for photos here.

Image 1: Instagram and Xibo image used to market Swipe Out Hunger SIU.

Image 2: Table set up outside Lentz dining hall as part of the Swipe Drive.

Image 3: Informational piece advertising the Swipe Out Hunger SIU program displayed prominently at the Swipe Drive. Fun fact: This board has been upcycled 4 times!

Image 4: Sandwich board used to catch the attention of students at the dining halls.

Image 5: Graduate Assistant, Kyle Miller, in front of the table at Trueblood dining hall for the first day of the Swipe Drive.

7. In 2-5 sentences, describe what you learned from completing the Green Fund grant process. Include a detailed response (Do not simply respond “yes” or “no.”) to at least one of the following questions to help us understand how this project has impacted your overall university experience.

Do you have a different understanding of sustainability now than you did at the beginning of the process?

At the beginning of the grant writing process I did not know much about sustainability. In fact, I thought that sustainability only pertained to environmental protection. After completing this project, I now understand that there are three main pillars of sustainability: Social equity, Economic viability, and environmental protection.

8. List suggestions for the SIU Sustainability Council to improve the Green Fund Award Process here: NA

Final Report forms should be sent electronically, in editable Microsoft Word format, to greenfund@siu.edu. This should be completed before requesting final reimbursement. A Sustainability Council designate will review final reports before final amount is dispersed.