

Arkansas Tech University's BECAUSE WE CAN



HANDOUT 2

Background:

1. Because We Can is a student led organization that works to develop initiatives and programs meant to help economically vulnerable faculty, staff, students and citizens of the River Valley
2. Originates from a sociological theory class in 2014 with three students. Grows to more than 200 students by Spring of 2018, with Dr. Sean Huss and Dr. James Stobaugh as advisors.
3. Projects range from toy drives in support of Department of Child and Family Services to hygiene drives in support of the Russellville School District. They also include dorm cleanouts to support local school backpack food programs to food recovery and the campus pantry. Thus far, students have been able to raise and distribute more than \$150,000 in goods, grants, and donations back into the local community to help our most vulnerable.
4. Presently working with ATU Student Services to institutionalize these initiatives.

What We Know:

1. Feeding America notes that fifteen states presently have significantly higher household food insecurity rates than the U.S. national average of **13.0%**. **Arkansas is ranked 5th** among those states with significantly higher household **food insecurity at 17.5%**.
2. Statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Feeding America suggest that roughly **10%** of all clients to charitable food pantries/food banks are **college students**, with additional statistics indicating that as many as 25% of students on some campuses skip or more meals during the week because they lack financial resources.
3. *Hunger on Campus*, the most comprehensive study to date on campus food insecurity, indicates that as many as **48%** of students on both community college and **four-year university campuses are food insecure**. This study also indicates that food insecurity rates are higher for African American (57%) and first generation students (56%).
4. ATU presently has **6,009 Full Pell Grant Eligible** undergraduate students with **\$0 estimated family contribution**; that is, roughly **63.5%** of all undergraduate students as of Spring 2018. While not all of these students receive Pell Grants, we know that Pell eligible students are more likely to be economically and food insecure. We know at least 30.59% of ATU students are first generation, with 9.7% of those students as African American and 12.46% as Hispanic. Given what we know about food insecurity on college campuses, food insecurity at ATU may be higher than we have identified thus far.

5. We will begin formal data collection in the Fall 2018 to estimate the number of our students that are food insecure. But, given the demographic characteristics of our student body, we expect the numbers to be comparable to other universities. Working with both food programs over the years, we have seen a great deal of anecdotal evidence to suggest this is a continuing and possibly growing problem on our campuses. For example, we have had students living in cars or on the streets reach out to us for assistance. This happens fairly frequently. We hope to have more accurate estimates by May 2019.

Food Insecurity Projects:

1. Campus Kitchen at ATU / Food Recovery—Through our food recovery program, students collect and distribute cooked but unserved food from on campus food outlets. Prior to this program, all unused but edible food was discarded in the trash. Our program works to recover that food (essentially untouched leftovers) and distribute it to local pantries and shelters. Since beginning in 2016, students have recovered and redistributed more than **22 tons of food (45,916 lbs)** to the needy in our area. This food is not directly distributed to students in need, but it is given to off campus partners where many food insecure students go for aid.
2. Green and Gold Cupboard – The Green and Gold Cupboard is the Arkansas Tech University campus pantry. It was established in the Fall of 2017 through a grant from Tyson Foods, Inc. The Green and Gold Cupboard exists to provide food to faculty, students, and staff that may be in need of assistance. As with the food recovery program, students manage food drives, food distribution, and other general tasks associated with managing the pantry. Thus far, the Green and Gold Cupboard has collected more than **2 tons of donated, non-perishable food** from the campus community, which has been used to feed 27 students and their families along with 6 staff families. This includes **56 adults, 15 children, and 1 senior**.
3. ATU Ozark Campus Pantry—Presently, plans are in development to expand the Green and Gold Cupboard services to the ATU Ozark Campus. The Ozark Campus pantry is expected to be fully operational and sustainable by May of 2019. Operations on the Ozark campus will mirror those of the ATU main campus.