



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Wolf Administration: Hunger-Free Campus Initiative Helps College Students Access Free Nutritious Food Options

Harrisburg, PA – First Lady Frances Wolf and Acting Secretary of Education Eric Hagarty today joined students, faculty, and vested partners at Millersville University to announce the [Hunger-Free Campus Initiative](#) to help students at risk of hunger to access free, healthy food on college campuses across Pennsylvania.

“Hunger is a devastating reality affecting too many of Pennsylvania’s postsecondary students as they strive to further their education, and today I am proud to say that, here in Pennsylvania, we are refusing to accept it,” said First Lady Wolf. “I invite all of Pennsylvania’s institutions of higher education to apply for the Hunger-Free Campus designation and join their dedicated colleagues in ensuring our students have access to the tools they need to succeed, especially nutritious food.”

The Hunger-Free Campus Initiative and the Hunger-Free Campus+ Initiative help build a coalition of Pennsylvania institutions of higher education (IHEs) focused on addressing hunger and other basic needs for their students, creating opportunities for connection among student hunger advocates, providing resources and strategies for campuses, and supporting opportunities to apply for grants related to addressing food insecurity.

“We know that students need access to healthy food to stay focused, learn, grow, and thrive. And yet, many postsecondary students face financial barriers to filling their most basic needs,” said Hagarty. “The Hunger-Free Campus Initiative empowers Pennsylvania’s colleges and universities to combat hunger on their campuses and provide the resources that students need to continue their education and go on to obtain family-sustaining, meaningful careers.”

Pennsylvania institutions of higher education that are taking steps to address student hunger can apply for the PA Hunger-Free Campus designation. Institutions that receive this designation will receive a certificate of recognition from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, receive public recognition through placement on the PA Hunger-Free Campus website, be able to use the PA Hunger-Free Campus logo on materials to indicate the institution’s awareness of and focus on solving student hunger, and be prepared for future grant opportunities.

“Food insecurity is a threat to student success on college campuses here in Pennsylvania and across the U.S.,” said Dr. Daniel A. Wubah, president of Millersville University. “It has the potential to impact academics, wellness and behavior which are factors that have bearing on student retention and graduation rates. At Millersville University we have a range of programs to help ensure our students don’t go hungry. For instance, Share Meals is a free app that MU students can use to geolocate free meals at MU. And, since 2012 we have worked with Campus Cupboard to provide a food pantry for our students.”

The 2022-23 state budget included a \$1 million investment to begin the Hunger-Free Campus grant program, which would help schools enhance food pantries, increase Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) outreach, improve data gathering, and participate in other initiatives that help meet the nutritional needs of students. This investment, when coupled with the budget increases for the postsecondary sector, will help reduce barriers impacting college and career goal attainment.

Schools must obtain a Hunger-Free Campus designation to apply for grant funding, and a Request for Applications for grant funds will be released this fall.

An estimated 36 percent of students know someone who dropped out of college due to food insecurity during the pandemic, and roughly 52 percent of students who faced food or housing insecurity in 2020 did not apply for support because they did not know how.

A [2018 report](#) released by the federal Government Accountability Office found that about half of all undergraduate students in 2016 were financially independent, and the average age of a college student today is 25 years old. About 22 percent of all undergrads that year had dependent children of their own, and 14 percent were single parents.

Additionally, many college students have relied on free or reduced priced meals throughout their education. Those programs do not exist for college students, even though the food challenges they had in grade school can follow them into the next phase of their lives and may even become more challenging as they juggle new financial responsibilities like housing, books, and other costs.

Since 2019, [First Lady Wolf has highlighted efforts](#) of higher education professionals, students, and anti-hunger advocates addressing hunger and food insecurity on college campuses.

For more information about Pennsylvania’s education policies and programs, please visit the [Department of Education’s website](#). Follow PDE on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), or [Pinterest](#).

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