



ASWWU EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

Documents for:

April 25th, 2024 | 5:30 PM | VU 567, TEAMS
Town Hall

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Referendum to Address Food Insecurity at WWU

Officially sponsored by Lola Thompson, [Insert Names of Sponsoring Parties]

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

By supporting this referendum, you are affirming a commitment to fight food insecurity at Western. Students and staff have made it clear that additional resources are necessary to both sustain and expand beyond the on-campus food pantries. For \$4.50, students could help build a stronger, more resilient community at Western.

This referendum would permit the AS to collect a \$4.50 fee during fall, winter, and spring quarters from full-time students who attend courses on WWU's Bellingham campus. This fund shall be used by the AS Western Hub of Living Essentials (WHOLE) pantry to hire a full-time staff member for a two-year term to help orchestrate food distribution and work towards systemic, long-term solutions which reduce reliance on pantries. The remaining funds will be used to purchase food stock to be distributed to all pantries on campus as appropriate. This referendum shall be re-evaluated by ASWWU constituents every second election, with the first re-evaluation occurring the academic year following the staff member's hiring.

We students are uniquely vulnerable to food insecurity, but we also have the unique capacity to enact positive change. It is not our responsibility to pick up the slack left behind when our State Representatives and University Administration neglect our basic needs. Still, we have the opportunity to make a tangible impact in our community. This referendum will not end food insecurity, but it will make conditions better for students in the short term and buy us more time to call upon these officials to step up.

WAITING SENATE & EXEC APPROVAL

Referendum Proposal to Address Food Insecurity at WWU

Proposed to AS Senate & Exec Board by Lola Thompson

UNDERSTANDING FOOD INSECURITY

For students at Western Washington University, food insecurity is a regular issue. The office of Student Life has identified that 45% of students experience food insecurity on at least a monthly basis. This staggeringly high number has likely grown since the 2021 survey; the Swipe-out-Hunger program has been inactive for over a year and prices around campus have continued to climb.

With declining support from the state government and increasing economic inequality across the state, students are reliant on the on-campus food pantry network to secure their nutritional needs. This critical safety net has also experienced declining state support and, as of spring 2024, is struggling to meet the needs of the Western community. Through conversations with students, staff, and pantry operators, the following needs have been identified:

1. **Additional Resources:** Nearly all food pantries on campus are currently funded exclusively through departmental funds and agreements with community organizations. With these limited resources, the pantries often struggle to provide adequate resources. Shelves can go unstocked for days and the variety of the food available is often determined by the donating organizations.
2. **Staffing Pantries:** Pantry operators, on top of their regular responsibilities as university employees, are tasked with the additional responsibilities of operating the food pantries. With limited time and money, these pantry operators struggle to manage stocking shelves, gathering donations, purchasing foods, and conducting outreach.
3. **Reducing Stigma:** Students struggling with food insecurity are often hesitant to use the on-campus pantry network due to a sense of stigma, perceived barriers to access, and a hesitance to use the resources available to them. This stigma results in students not willing to access resources which would tangibly benefit their life circumstances.

PROPOSAL

We students are uniquely vulnerable to food insecurity, but we also have the unique capacity to enact positive change. It is not our responsibility to pick up the slack left behind when our State Representatives and University Administration neglect our basic needs. Still, we have the opportunity to make a tangible impact in our community as we call upon these officials to step up. The AS, as a student organization, is positioned to facilitate this positive change for each of the points identified above. Thus, we call upon the student body to answer the following question:

Shall the students of Western Washington University approve a quarterly fee of \$4.50 to bolster food stock in food pantries across campus and to pay for a two-year position to administer this fund while implementing long-term food security strategies?

SPECIFICATIONS

If passed, this referendum would permit the AS to collect a \$4.50 fee during fall, winter, and spring quarters from full-time students who attend courses on WWU's Bellingham campus. This fund shall be used by the AS Western Hub of Living Essentials (WHOLE) pantry to hire a full-time staff member for a two-year term to help orchestrate food distribution and work towards systemic, long-term solutions which reduce reliance on pantries. The remaining funds will be used to purchase food stock to be distributed to all pantries on campus as appropriate. This referendum shall be re-evaluated by ASWWU constituents every second election, with the first re-evaluation occurring the academic year following the staff member's hiring