



UMB News

UMB Pop-Up Pantry Hits the Spot with Food Donations

March 17, 2021 | By [Lou Cortina](#)

The issue of food insecurity is real among students at the [University of Maryland, Baltimore \(UMB\)](#), with nearly one-third surveyed in fall 2020 saying they felt some level of uncertainty regarding their food supply.



Erika Malone, the mother of UMB CURE Scholar Emani Malone, picks up food at the Intercultural Center's Pop-Up Pantry with the help of UMB Police Officer Yale Partlow. (Matthew Paul D'Agostino/UMB Staff Photo)

UMB's Intercultural Center, Division of Student Affairs, and Police Department (UMBPD) took a step toward combating the problem March 13, collaborating with other partners to provide 30-pound boxes of nonperishable food items to students as well as employees and community members at a Pop-Up Pantry.

UMB volunteers gave away 30 boxes to drive-up and walk-up recipients at an area between

Pratt Street Garage and the University of Maryland School of Nursing building. With COVID-19 safety protocols requiring masks and physical distancing in place, volunteers placed the boxes inside the vehicles. For a few students who walked up to the site, UMBPD officers assisted with transporting the boxes to their residences.

The boxes included items such as pasta, cereal, peanut butter, nonperishable milk, canned soup, and canned vegetables. The food was provided through a partnership among UMB, the University of Maryland Medical System, the city of Baltimore, the Maryland Food Bank, and Saval Foodservice, said Courtney Jones Carney, MBA, director of the Intercultural Center and executive director of intercultural leadership and engagement at UMB.

“It’s extremely important for us to have pop-up events like this and to make sure students and others connected to UMB receive shelf-stable food that they can use,” Jones Carney said. “Once we received the food, we reached out to UMBPD to see if they could partner with us in the distribution, because it definitely matches with their community outreach efforts.”

Acting Sgt. Hazel Lewis, who was among the UMBPD officers aiding the effort on a pleasant Saturday afternoon, was happy to lend a hand.

“It’s a great idea for the University to be giving out this food, because it helps those who are in need,” said Lewis, who also noted a side benefit. “A lot of people have not been on campus because of the pandemic, so it’s also a good way to say hi and maybe even call it a ‘thank-you box.’ ”

Lewis’ colleague, Sgt. Thaddeus Baker, agreed. “There are people in dire need right now, so for the University and the Department of Public Safety to reach out and provide food to students and others who need it is very special,” he said. “This gives people what they’d need to make some nutritious meals.”

Jones Carney said about 70 boxes remain to be distributed and efforts are underway to figure out how to do that, with additional pop-up events or possibly delivery by vehicle.

In the survey of UMB students in fall 2020, 29 percent of respondents said they were worried that their food would run out before they had money to buy more; 22 percent said the food they had bought didn’t last and they didn’t have money to get more; and 33 percent said they could not afford to eat balanced meals.

The Pop-Up Pantry is one facet of UMB’s efforts to address that level of food insecurity. Before the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded in March 2020, the Division of Student Affairs/Campus Life Services was planning to implement a food pantry in the Southern Management Corporation Campus Center that would have been available to students in the 2020-21 academic year.

The space remains under construction and should be completed within the next couple of months, hopefully by June 1, Jones Carney says. “While the pantry will be a physical space for storage, we also are looking into purchasing lockers so students could pick up food at their convenience,” she said. “COVID has slowed the process of launching the pantry, but we are working through it.”

Jones Carney adds this message for students: Don’t hesitate to ask for help.

“We’ve heard from some students who think their need is not great enough to benefit from the food pantry or to benefit from student emergency funds,” she said. “I remind students that there is no particular threshold we are measuring for them to receive these benefits. So if students do not have enough funding to eat or to replenish their food supply in a timely manner, we want to make sure they’re taking advantage of these opportunities.”

Members of the UMB community wishing to help students with food insecurity can contribute to the [UMB Student Food Insecurity Fund](#). Students experiencing food insecurity can check out [these resources](#) on the Intercultural Center’s website.

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