Campus Food Bank sees increase in usage

Ravanne Lawday

Food banks across Canada have recently reported notable spikes in usage according to the 2018 HungerCount survey with Alberta facing the second largest increase in clientele. The University of Alberta's Campus Food Bank is no exception to this statistic, serving more students than ever.

Alleys Seibert, executive director of the U of A’s Campus Food Bank, said numerous factors have contributed to the increased need for the organization’s services among the student population.

She noted the greatest factor is the high cost of living in Edmonton, which half of the students cited as a reason for food bank usage, as well as the low limit of Albertan student loans.

“We are still feeling the struggle of students trying to get by on their student loans, and they’re often not at a high enough limit for them to afford nutritious foods or any food at all,” Seibert explained.

She added that a possible reason behind the increased food bank usage at the U of A and the province could be due to the recession.

“We find that in times of economic distress like we’re still recovering from now, we see a lot of new clients coming in because they aren’t getting the work hours, or the wage they need to support their studies,” Seibert emphasized the impact that the provincial economy has on food bank usage.

“It’s interesting to note that in times where Alberta has prospered economically, we see less clients coming in. It’s not just more people hearing about us and coming to us — it’s a decrease in need when there are more jobs available. Students shouldn’t have to compromise their working and living in unfavourable conditions just to get by.”

The clients that Seibert sees on a daily basis come from all walks of life. “You walk around with these people, you take classes with them. They might even be someone who has been your TA in class.”

Although increased usage is raising awareness for the Campus Food Bank, Seibert hopes to see fewer students dependent on the services they provide.

“We hope that people aren’t reliant on us because it is difficult for students to depend solely on us. We’re here for extenuating circumstances, like when situations arise that you can’t plan for. Obviously we’d like to see the numbers go down.”

With the holidays approaching, the organization is kicking into high gear to ensure that no student goes hungry over the winter break.

“We’re a referring agent for the Christmas Bureau,” Seibert explained. “They give out food hampers to families through Santas Anonymous. Our current clients are able to come and be signed up to receive a food hamper, so that they can have a really enjoyable holiday meal with their family and friends.”

Students interested in making donations or volunteering for the Campus Food Bank can consult campusfoodbank.ca for more details.

As you may be aware, Christmas seems to start sooner and sooner. WE ASKED... When should the holiday season start?

Shanda-Lynn Berns

“The last part of November. You get out of Halloween and you start Christmas shopping already and it’s so overwhelming. It’s hard getting into the Christmas spirit jumping from one holiday to the next.”

Marc Rocoppa

“The first snowfall. Christmas isn’t Christmas without snow.”