UBC Social Ecological Economic Development Studies (SEEDS) Sustainability Program Student Research Report

Determining Effective Avenues for Sustaining a UBC Meal Donation Program Nina Andres, Rojin Hajimonshi, Maha Meerza, Adeline Peng, Rithikha Rajamohan University of British Columbia Course: PSYC 421 Themes: Community, Climate Date: April 14, 2020

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#### **Executive Summary**

This study investigates the best way to frame and structure a meal donation program at UBC to increase funding and support, as well as optimize fundraising efforts. We predicted participants who were provided with excerpts featuring other students' experiences with food insecurity would donate more than participants who were not. Furthermore, we predicted the most favourable donation methods were passive (by default) ones that require minimal effort on the donors part, as opposed to active (self-driven) methods. Through an online survey we assessed our hypotheses by randomly assigning UBC students, faculty and staff (N = 96) to receive either a basic questionnaire about their knowledge of food insecurity, amount they were willing to donate, and preferred method of donating, either with or without food insecurity quotes from affected students. Results from a Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney U-test suggest that there is no significant difference in donation amount due to the inclusion of personal quotes, however the effect of other marketing strategies, such as using visual elements, were not considered. A Chi-Square goodness of fit test indicates there is statistical significance in students' preference for passive donation methods over active ones, speaking to the need for providing convenient donation avenues tailored to different UBC demographics.

#### Introduction

Across Canada up to 40% of university students face food insecurity (Kozicky, 2019). This can be defined as "inadequate or insecure access to food based on financial constraints" (Food Insecurity Policy Research, 2018). Based on the 2019 Undergraduate Experience Survey, 38.5% of UBC undergraduates experience this pervasive issue (Hakim & Alnaar, 2019). Four campus groups were identified as being at heightened risk: international students, transgender/non-binary students, students with mental health diagnoses and disabilities and students with loans (Hakim & Alnaar, 2019). In addition, usage of the UBC Alma Mater Society (AMS) Food Bank increased by 41% in 2019 (Kozicky, 2019). Due to numerous physical and mental consequences associated with food insecurity (Davison et al., 2019), there is a need to address this as soon as possible. Current successful meal donation programs such as Swipe Out Hunger have largely been funded by excess funds from student meal plan accounts (Lund, 2019). However, new ways of establishing consistent funding are required since meal plan dollars do not expire at UBC. Previously, Small et al. (2007) discovered that donations were more effectively sourced when personal stories about individuals were featured rather than statistical references. When statistics are shown alone, a phenomenon known as psychic numbing induces increased feelings of indifference towards the featured issue, thereby making people less inclined to act. Moreover, Lee et al. (2018) found that identifiable references to persons induced feelings of higher sympathy and distress which encouraged people to donate more generously. Previous studies have also shown that "no-action defaults" or opt-out strategies used in organ donation policy led to an increase in donations, since the process of opting out required greater cognitive and decision-making effort (Johnson & Goldstein, 2003). Based on these two psychological concepts, our research sought to understand if passive or opt-out donation avenues are more popular among students than active donation avenues. Additionally, we investigated whether the inclusion of personal stories to marketing material will increase donations to a meal donation program at UBC.

#### **Research Question and Hypotheses**

Our research seeks to answer the question of how we can best frame a meal donation program within the UBC community to increase willingness to donate, in addition to identifying avenues (donation methods) that would optimize fundraising efforts for such a program. We hypothesized that participants who are given excerpts of other students' experiences with food insecurity before completing the survey will donate more than those who were not. We also hypothesized that passive donation methods (donations collected by default and with minimal effort) will be more favourable among students than active donation methods (where participants must put in more effort to donate).

#### **Participant Sample**

#### Methods

Study participants were limited to individuals within the UBC community (undergraduate and graduate students, faculty and staff). A power analysis (Appendix: Calculations) was conducted using a 95% confidence level and the 2018/2019 student population of 54,863 (University of British Columbia, 2019). This yielded a minimum target sample size of 382 for this study. Our total obtained sample size was 99 participants consisting of undergraduate students (n = 75), graduate students (n = 9), staff (n = 10), faculty (n = 2) and other (n = 3) (Figure 1). Participants represented the faculties of Arts, Land and Food Systems, Science, Engineering, Applied Science, Forestry, Business, and Education (Figure 2). 10% were in their

first year of studies (Figure 1). After eliminating participants who identified as being outside the current UBC community, we retained a final sample size of 96 valid responses.

## **Conditions & Measures**

We designed and implemented an online survey to test our two hypotheses, and to gather additional feedback on the UBC community's openness to a food donation program.

**Part 1:** The first part of our study investigated how to best frame a meal donation program to potential donors. Qualtrics A/B testing was used to set two conditions: version A (control) and version B (challenger) of the survey. These were randomly assigned to respondents. The challenger version differed from the control due to the inclusion of a short narrative (Appendix: Identifiable Lives) by students who have experienced food insecurity. This was used to see if including personalized elements would increase willingness to support the program compared to the inclusion of statistical references alone. The independent variables for this part of the study were the two survey versions: A and B. The dependent variable is the amount of money a participant is willing to donate to the program. To avoid restricting participant answers, values for the dependent variable were acquired through two survey questions: one which asked for donation amount and the second asking for the frequency (one-time, weekly, monthly, yearly) that respondents would be willing to donate at this point in time. We expected that Version B (challenger with student quotes about food insecurity) would result in higher donation amounts than Version A (control without quotes).

**Part 2:** The objective of the second part was to investigate how to best structure UBC meal donation programs in terms of funding avenues. Our independent variables were the type of donation method, while our dependent variable consisted of participant rankings of these donation methods. The dependent variable was measured through a survey question which asked participants to rank three different donation options from highest (rank of 1) to lowest (rank of 3) preference (Appendix: Survey Questions, Q3). Participants were also given the option to assign the same rank to more than one method. Afterwards, they were asked to qualitatively explain the reasons for their rankings. This was to provide additional insight into any quantitative trends in the results. We expected to see higher support for donation methods which are passive and easier to complete (i.e. small fee attached to Term 1 school fees or opt-out of 5% discount when using UBC flex dollars to purchase food), while expecting lower support levels for donation methods which require actively donating (i.e. navigating to a website to make a donation).

A Qualtrics survey was designed and disseminated online through various UBC-related e-newsletters and social media channels such as Facebook groups. Participants were given an overview of the study and its purpose, our target participant pool and how their data would be used prior to signing a consent form. The survey was open from March 4th to March 23rd, with the first day of responses used as pilots to refine the survey into its final format from day 2 onwards. The survey consisted of four main sections: the first included definitions of food insecurity and a meal donation program, as well as general questions related to participants' knowledge of food insecurity and likelihood of using or supporting a food donation program at UBC. The next part consisted of A/B testing branches where participants were assigned to Part 2 of the survey. This part either contained personal quotes or did not. Both branches of Part 2 contained survey questions directly related to this study (donation amount, frequency, and ranking of donation methods). Part 3 collected secondary information for our clients on the current usage of campus food security services (this was not directly related to our research). Finally, the last section consisted of demographic questions. Our greatest challenge was

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disseminating the survey to enough participants (target sample size was 382) and ensuring that each faculty and demographic group (undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, and staff) were proportionally represented in the participant pool. We found that survey responses dipped after the second week of March, potentially due to the COVID-19 situation, despite us reaching out to a new set of survey disseminators.

#### Results

Statistical analysis was conducted to determine if participants who were shown quotes about other students' experiences with food insecurity (group 2, survey B) would donate more than participants who were not (group 1, Survey A). From a total of 96 participants, 55 were given survey A, while 41 were given survey B. Thus, the number of survey A participants was reduced to 41 by excluding responses in chronological order that were over this limit. As donation amount and donation frequency data were collected from two separate questions, we equalized the donation frequencies by converting the donation amounts to their yearly equivalent. As a result, two separate independent samples t-tests were conducted in order to differentiate between the yearly (consisting of equalized weekly, monthly, yearly reponses) and one-time donation amounts.

Figure 3 shows that mean and median donation amounts are higher for group 2 who were shown quotes (M = 50.0; Median = 93.7) than group 1 who were not (M = 20.0; Median = 79.2). However, Figure 4 shows the spread of group 1 donation amounts (SD = 137) is larger than that of group 2 (SD = 99.9). Out of the 82 participants, 24 chose the weekly, monthly, or yearly donation frequency (12 per survey type group), while 58 chose to make one time donations (29 per survey type group).

A Shapiro-Wilk Test of Normality and Levene's Test of Equality of Variances were also conducted for the weekly, monthly, yearly (WMY) and one-time (OT) donation frequency groups. The results of these tests (Figure 7, 8) were significant for the OT group (Shapiro-Wilk: [Group1: W = 0.80, p = 0.009] and [Group2: W = 0.80, p < 0.01]; Levene's: F = 12.70, p = 0.002), indicating that the data for both groups were not normally distributed and have unequal variances. Only the Shapiro-Wilk test results were significant for the WMY group (Group 1: W = 0.65, p < 0.001]; Group 2: W = 0.86, p < 0.001), indicating the data for both groups have unequal variances. Due to the nature of the data, the Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney U-test (non-parametric t-test), was used to compare the two independent samples in the WMY and OT donation frequency groups. An alternative hypothesis that group 1 donation amounts were less than group 2's was used for both the Wilcoxon tests at a 95% significance level. Results (Figure 5, 6) also suggested no significant difference in donation amount between group 1 and group 2 for both donation frequency: W = 252, p = 0.144; OT frequency: W = 52, p = 0.126).

A Chi-Square goodness of fit test was used to determine if certain donation methods were preferred over others. Since only student responses were used from a total sample size of 96, this analysis had a final sample size of 84. Descriptive statistics (Figure 9) suggested that establishing a one-time refundable AMS fee of 50 cents was the most popular donation method choice with 71.2% of participants ranking this as their first choice. Opting out and automatically donating the 5% flex dollar discount was most ranked as second choice, while direct donations via an online donation page was ranked as the least favoured choice by 44.3% of participants. Results from the Chi-Square test (Figure 10) suggest that these differences in the preference ranking of donation method are statistically significant,  $X^2$  (2, N = 84) = 54.6, p < 0.00001.

Discussion

#### Part 1 - How to Frame a Meal Donation Program.

Though descriptive statistics suggest that those who were exposed to personal narratives donated more to a meal donation program than those who were not, this was not supported by our statistical analysis which suggested there was no significant difference between group 1 and group 2's donation amounts. In the future it may be worthwhile to consider the effect of other mediums, such as graphics in the form of posters, videos and other media on participants willingness to donate. The use of other media forms may have more impact as people are able to better conceptualize information when they can relate more visually and personally to an issue (Giles, 2006). As our study only focused on the use of quotes from individuals as part of our independent variable, the study could be improved by changing the variant form for our A/B testing or by including multiple variants, such as videos or images as part of the personal narrative. It may also be an important consideration in future marketing approaches for effectively informing students about such a program and how they can either support or access its services. We also believe that some optimism bias might be at play through the question on donation frequency; specifically, a form of hyperbolic-discounting known as current-moment bias where participants may have reported being willing to make future donations of a certain amount but in reality they may not donate at all or as much (Balcetis et al., 2008). In the future, this should be addressed in the overall picture to minimize overestimation of donations. Possible ways to do this could be in-person study with proxies for money where participants are given a certain number of chocolates which they are asked to donate to a hypothetical person in need. Additionally, there may be a confound in the study, as those who are most likely to fill out the survey are those who care about the issue more and may experience it currently or in the past. As such, when asked how much money they would be willing to donate, these participants may be less likely to contribute monetarily regardless of whether they were shown quotes on the subject or not.

#### Part 2 - How to structure a meal donation program to optimize fundraising efforts

The results of the Chi-Square test combined strongly suggest that participants prefer passive methods of donation over active methods for reasons pertaining to convenience (i.e. automatically added fee) and possibly the cognitive-load associated with having to navigate to a donation website. The most popular method of donation is adding a small AMS fee to yearly fees for all students (who also have the option of opting-out if desired). These results were derived from student answers only, however in the future it would be worthwhile to study which avenues are most convenient and preferred by other UBC community members such as faculty and staff and to see if the same results hold for this demographic who may be able to contribute a significant amount of funding to support the program. This would allow the proper donation avenues to be created for varying target supporters in meal donation programs (e.g. passive methods are preferred by undergraduates but perhaps active methods may be preferred by another UBC affiliation).

#### **Other Improvements**

In terms of the reliability of the survey, inserting a buffer question, such as "Please click 'most likely' for this question" would allow for increased reliability of results, ensuring participants are reading the questions and not just randomly answering them. As of 2019, graduate students were the most likely population at UBC to use the AMS food bank (Kozicky, 2019; Hakim & Alnaar, 2019). The majority of our data collected was sourced from undergraduate students, therefore future research with a focus on graduate student attitudes and thoughts towards accessing meal donation programs may shed new light on how these programs can effectively cater to all students in need rather than focusing on one particular demographic.

Furthermore, due to limitations in time and resources we did not reach our target minimum sample size of 382, therefore it's difficult to say that we have detected any effect with confidence. Therefore reaching the minimum sample size calculated from the power analysis and ensuring that all target participants are well-represented in the final sample is another area of improvement for the future.

#### **Recommendations for the UBC Client**

- 1. It may be useful to consider marketing strategies that employ more personalized, visual elements. While this was not proven by our study results, previous research suggests that elements such as statistics and personal narratives in the form graphics, videos, and other visual content may provoke stronger emotional reactions and be more effective in inducing action from a viewer.
- 2. When rolling out a future donation platform for the meal donation program, it's important to consider the ease of donating for different kinds of donors (students versus faculty). Our research shows that there was overwhelming amount of support for passive donation methods with adding a small fee to tuition assessment being the most popular (preferred most by 77% of participants). This option can potentially provide a consistent, long-term source of funding for a meal donation program.
- 3. Guidance on establishing a consistent funding source can also be taken from existing student-driven initiatives such as the AMS Sustainable Food Access Fund which is a \$0.35 fee added to students' annual fees in order to increase the affordability of four critical sustainable campus food outlets UBC Sprouts, Agora Cafe, Roots on the Roof, and UBC Farm. More information can be found <u>here</u> on the fund and the process of adding a new fee to annual AMS fees.

#### Appendix

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## Calculations

Sample Size Calculation:

Sample Size = (Distribution of 50%) / ((Margin of Error% / Confidence Level Score)Squared) <u>Finite Population Correction:</u> True Sample = (Sample Size X Population) / (Sample Size + Population - 1)

Based on a 54,863 student population size (2018/19) undergraduate and graduate enrollment, 95% confidence level, and 5% margin of error, the sample size needed will be 382.

2018/2019 enrollment statistics will be used to determine the minimum number of responses needed from students of each faculty and by education level (graduate vs. undergraduate) to ensure responses are proportional to current faculty enrollment numbers. Responses are collected based on faculty and education level in order to help inform a more tailored approach to future marketing efforts for the food donation program at UBC.

#### Faculty Proportion Example Calculation:

*N<sub>Science students</sub>* = ((Total Enrolled Science Students) / (Total UBC student population)) \* (Sample Size)

## Figures

# Figure 1: UBC Community Affiliation



Figure 2: Department Affiliation



Results

	<b>Final Don</b>	ation Amount	
	1 (no quotes)	2 (shown quotes)	
Valid	41	41	
Mean	79.171	93.683	
Median	20.000	50.000	
Mode	20.000	240.000	
Std. Deviation	137.020	99.933	
Minimum	0.000	0.000	
Maximum	600.000	300.000	
Sum	3246.000	3841.000	

## Figure 3: Donation Amount - Descriptive Statistics

## Figure 4: Donation Amount Descriptive Statistics - Boxplot



## Figure 5: Weekly, Monthly, Yearly (WMY) donation frequency - Assumption Checks

Test of Normality (Shapiro-Wilk)

		W	р
FinalAmountWMY	1	0.654	< .001
	2	0.856	< .001

Note. Significant results suggest a deviation from normality.

Test of Equality of Variances (Levene's)

	F	df	р
FinalAmountWMY	0.068	1	0.795

Figure 6: Weekly, Monthly, Yearly (WMY) donation frequency - Test Results

#### Independent Samples T-Test

				95% CI for Rank-	Biserial Correlation
	W	р	Rank-Biserial Correlation	Lower	Upper
FinalAmountWMY	352.000	0.144	-0.163	-∞	0.087

Note. Mann-Whitney U test.

## Figure 7: One-time (OT) donation frequency - Assumption Checks

Test of Normality (Shapiro-Wilk)

		W	р
Final Donation Amount	1	0.798	0.009
	2	0.802	0.010

Note. Significant results suggest a deviation from normality.

#### Test of Equality of Variances (Levene's)

	F	df	р
Final Donation Amount	12.701	1	0.002

# Figure 8: One-time (OT) donation frequency - Test Results

Independent Samples T-Test

				95% CI for Rank-Biserial Correlation	
	W	р	Rank-Biserial Correlation	Lower	Upper
Final Donation Amount	52.500	0.126	-0.271	~~~	0.117

Note. Mann-Whitney U test.

# Figure 9: Donation Method - Descriptive Statistics



# Figure 10: Donation Method - Chi-Square Goodness of Fit Test Results

Results						
	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3			Row Totals
\$0.50 Annual AMS Fee	57 (32.80) [17.85]	18 (26.11) [2.52]	5 (21.09) [12.27]			80
Online Donation Page	19 (32.39) [5.54]	25 (25.78) [0.02]	35 (20.82) [9.65]			79
Donate 5% Flex Dollar Discount	22 (32.80) [3.56]	35 (26.11) [3.03]	23 (21.09) [0.17]			80
Column Totals	98	78	63			239 (Grand Total)

The chi-square statistic is 54.6103. The *p*-value is < 0.00001. The result is significant at p < .05.

## **Identifiable Lives: Personal Narratives**

GOING TO UBC ON A TIGHT BUDGET MEANS I HAVE TO DECIDE BETWEEN ....

"Groceries or not being able to socialize with my friends because I cannot afford to get a coffee at a coffee shop to study."

- Gage Resident

*"Food or missing out on going anywhere with friends." – Hayley* 

"Figuring out how to live off \$100 a month or failing to do so and starving a few days. Skipping out on buying medication so I can afford my rent/food"

– Anonymous

# FINANCES AFFECTS MY EDUCATION BY ...

"Making me work extra hours when I should be studying." – Bob

"I go hungry days before a paycheck. Difficult to study or focus when hungry. Before you ask, yes I go to the food bank."

– Guy

"Constantly rejecting socializing invitations because I can't afford to join, or even skipping out on certain courses that require extra funds."

– Anonymous

## **Survey Questions**

## Part 1 - General Topic Questions

Q1. Approximately 38% of UBC undergraduate students experience food insecurity according to the 2019 Undergraduate Experience Survey. Food insecurity can be defined as having inadequate or insecure access to food due to various financial reasons and can have significant impacts on physical and mental well-being. At UBC, AMS Food Bank statistics indicate that it's a challenge many graduate students also face. How familiar are you with food insecurity?

- I currently experience it
- I have experienced it in the past
- □ It's not an issue for me but I am aware it's an issue for others at UBC
- It's not an issue for me and I was not aware of it being an issue for others at UBC

Q2. Many Universities are piloting or have established meal donation programs to help address food insecurity. Typically, funds are collected through various avenues and are digitally distributed to students in need through their student cards and can therefore be used discreetly at qualifying cafés and restaurants on campus.

- □ Definitely not
- □ Probably not
- $\Box$  No opinion
- □ Probably
- □ Definitely

Q2.1. If implemented at UBC, how likely would you be to request the financial support of the food donation program?

- $\bigcirc$  Not at all likely
- □ Not very likely
- □ Somewhat likely
- □ Likely
- □ Very likely

## Part 2 - A/B Testing and Research-Relevant Questions

# If assigned to the experimental condition, *Identifiable Lives: Personal Narratives* (Appendix) is <u>shown here, before Q2.3</u>

Q2.3. How much money would you be willing/able to donate in order to establish and support a similar program at UBC? (\$0 minimum).

Q2.4. Donation Frequency:

- Weekly
- Monthly
- Yearly
- $\bigcirc$  One time contribution

Q3. Which of the following donation avenues would you consider to support a meal donation program at UBC? A rank of 1 denotes your top choice and the same rank can be used more than once. \*Flex dollars refer to money uploaded to your student account which can be accessed through UBC student/staff/faculty cards to automatically get a 5% discount at UBC owned food outlets. If opt-ed out, your 5% would then be donated to a meal donation program.

- Establishing a refundable AMS fee of \$0.50 (automatically added to Winter Term 1 tuition). Type 0 if not a student
- □ Donating directly through an online donation page
- Opt-out of the 5% discount provided when purchasing food through flex dollars on your UBC card

Q3.1. Why did you choose your top funding avenue over the other options? (Open Answer)

# Part 3 - Secondary information questions for SEEDS partners

THERE ARE CURRENTLY A NUMBER OF INITIATIVES ON CAMPUS AIMING TO MAKE HEALTHY EATING AND MEALS MORE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL UBC STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND STAFF:

*1. Fooood Cafe* - A choose-what-you-pay café serving full breakfast and lunch meals for a minimum of \$5. Located in the Earth Sciences Building and operating Monday through Friday.

**2.** *Agora Cafe* - A student, volunteer-run café providing affordable, local and healthy food choices to UBC students and staff. Located in the basement of the H.R. McMillan Building.

*3. Sprouts Cafe & Community Eats* - A student, volunteer-run café serving affordable hot meals, drinks and snacks throughout the week and a by-donation community lunch every Friday. Located in Room 0001C (basement) of the UBC Life Building (Old Sub).

**4.** *AMS Food Bank* - An emergency food relief service for UBC students in need. Offers various non-perishable foods, personal hygiene supplies, budgeting tips and information on additional resources in and around Vancouver. Located in Room 0032 of the UBC Life Building (Old Sub).

Q4. Which of the food cafés and programs above did you previously know of?

- D Fooood Café
- Agora Café
- Sprouts Café
- □ Sprouts Community Eats
- □ AMS Food Bank
- $\Box$  None of the above

Q5. Which of the above cafés and programs have you purchased food or accessed before? Please note options 1 - 4 are open to the entire community and are not restricted to anyone based on financial need.

- D Fooood Café
- Agora Café
- Sprouts Café
- Sprouts Community Eats
- $\hfill\square$  None of the above

Q6. Do you plan on going to any of the cafes or using any of the programs listed above that you haven't previously been to or heard of?

- □ Yes
- O No
- □ Maybe
- $\hfill\square$  I've gone before and will continue to do so
- $\hfill\square$  I've gone before and will not continue to do so

Q7. If you've previously been to the cafés or accessed the programs listed above, did you find your experience enjoyable/useful?

- $\bigcirc$  Not at all
- $\bigcirc$  Not much
- $\Box$  Somewhat
- □ Very much
- $\bigcirc$  I haven't been to any of them

Q8. What aspects of them did you like/dislike and what could be improved? If you haven't previously accessed the cafés/programs above, please type n/a. (Open Answer)

# Part 4 - Demographic and Post-processing questions

Q9. Were you given a list of student quotes about food insecurity during this survey?

- □ Yes
- O No

Q10. How are you affiliated to UBC?

- □ Undergraduate Student
- Graduate Student
- □ Staff
- □ Faculty
- □ Other

Q11. Are you a first year student?

- □ Yes
- O No

Q12. Do you currently use flex dollars to purchase food at UBC? Flex dollars refer to money uploaded to your student account which can be accessed through UBC student/staff/faculty cards to get a 5% discount at UBC owned food outlets.

- □ Yes
- O No

Q13. Which department or staff unit at UBC do you study/work in? (Open Answer)

Q14. Please feel free to share any other thoughts or experiences you have that would help better inform a successful meal donation program at UBC. All responses are used anonymously. (Open Answer)

If you are currently struggling with food insecurity, additional resources and information can be found on the Fooood Café website. Please also refer to the information below:

**1.** *Fooood Cafe* - A choose-what-you-pay café serving full breakfast and lunch meals for a minimum of \$5. Located in the Earth Sciences Building and operating Monday through Friday.

**2.** *Agora Cafe* - A student, volunteer-run café providing affordable, local and healthy food choices to UBC students and staff. Located in the basement of the H.R. McMillan Building.

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