

THE BEST AT THE MARKET, IN YOUR KITCHEN AND ON YOUR TABLE

## A food bank run by, for students

The Emergency Food Pantry, Oregon's only such on-campus site, opens at OSU

By **LAURA McCANDLISH**  
SPECIAL TO THE OREGONIAN

A public health Ph.D. candidate from Malawi. A 21-year-old undergrad whose father just got laid off. A nutrition science grad student who struggles to afford the healthful foods she studies.

These are not your typical food bank clients. But then the new Emergency Food Pantry housed at Oregon State University in Corvallis isn't your standard assistance site.

It is the state's only known on-campus food pantry, and one of the rare student-run ones in the country, where volunteers serve their fellow students. Anticipated for

years, the OSU pantry finally opened its doors the first week of spring term, just in time for students still waiting for financial aid checks to clear. The recession has only further strained students already living paycheck to paycheck.

"As a culture we've decided that ramen noodles are OK as the only thing for college students to eat," said Sarah Cunningham, 26, who coordinates the pantry and is studying for a Ph.D. in anthropology. "But if students are going to be working and studying as hard as they are, then they need to have a well-rounded diet with fruits and vegetables, and good sources of protein as well."

Some OSU students were surprised to learn they qualified for food assistance. But individuals who make \$1,670 or less a month, or \$20,036 a year (not including grants and scholarships), meet the U.S. Department of Agriculture requirements. That certainly qualifies OSU's teaching assistants, who earn an estimated median of \$1,176 a month, according to the Coalition of Graduate Employees union that represents them.

"I need the food, with the two children I'm supporting on my graduate stipend, which is not enough," said the public health student, Ruth Mwandira, 47,

Please see **FOOD BANK** Page FD7

## Food bank: Site should ease strain on other pantries

Continued from Page FDI

putting pork chops and rice in her box on the pantry's second day open. "Now I can use the money I would have used for groceries to buy books."

The convenient on-campus location should ease the strain on the other swamped food pantries in Corvallis, said Ryan McCambridge, coordinator of the area's regional Linn Benton Food Share. Oregon State donated use of walk-in freezers and shelves in its Memorial Union East kitchen. The Linn Benton Food Share is providing and warehousing the thousands of pounds of free meat, dairy, grains and canned goods for just \$200 a month to cover logistics. The shopping-style pantry allows students to select their own items on the third Wednesday and the fourth Thursday evenings of the month.



TIFFANY WOODS/OSU EXTENSION

**There was a lot more than ramen noodles on hand at OSU's Emergency Food Pantry as coordinator Sarah Cunningham checked her inventory on opening day. Many college students aren't aware that they are often eligible for food assistance.**

### More information

To learn more about the OSU Emergency Food Pantry, e-mail [osufoodgroup@oregonstate.edu](mailto:osufoodgroup@oregonstate.edu) or call 541-737-3905.

A pesce-vegetarian, Sherry Farley, 33, loaded her bags with frozen sweet potatoes, dried Oregon apples, and cans of tuna and salmon. The nutrition science student had no idea about the pantry until a friend grabbed

her on her way over. If only Farley had had this resource as an undergrad in Georgia, when she scraped by on pasta and sauce.

"I actually am very surprised; this is fantastic," Farley said, hauling the food to her bike. "It's nice to know there's something out there to help. Some things I now don't have to buy."

In addition to doling out grub, the pantry will connect students to other social services, including food stamps.

Benton County has one of Oregon's lowest food stamp

participation rates, likely due, in part, to eligible college students in Corvallis who aren't applying, McCambridge said. Students who are at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty line (the \$1,670 a month) and work at least 20 hours a week or have young children should qualify, according to the Oregon Department of Human Services. Of course, their parents' income is factored in if they are still claimed as dependents.

"If more students that are eligible can get on food stamps, that is certainly a better way of addressing hunger issues than through an emergency food box," McCambridge said.

As the OSU Emergency Food Pantry takes off, Cunningham plans to write a guide to help other campuses start their own sites. The biggest hurdle thus far? Securing liability insurance for the program. The pantry had to join the local nonprofit Ten Rivers FoodWeb's umbrella, gaining coverage under its policy. With that 501(c)(3) status, the OSU pantry also became a member of the Oregon Food Bank Network.

E-mails about the new pantry from professors, student clubs and food security groups

have been buzzing around campus. McCambridge expects the site, which opened March 31, to serve 50 to 75 student households within weeks.

"I'm going to try to spread the word to other international

students," Mwandira said. "Don't suffer in silence. There's no shame in coming to get food."

•  
*Laura McCandlish is a writer in Corvallis who blogs at [baltimoregon.wordpress.com](http://baltimoregon.wordpress.com)*