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Homeless and Hunger Awareness Week at UC San Diego Empowers Students to Help Needy

As soon as Stephany Gonzalez enrolled at UC San Diego, she decided to volunteer at the campus’s food pantry. Her service was a thank you to her parents, who had to deal with food insecurity before emigrating from Guatemala to the United States, where they raised Stephany and her sister and encouraged them to pursue their college dreams.

“My mother and father always shared their stories about having to carefully ration out their meals and having to go without food—which influenced my interest in helping out at the food pantry,” Gonzalez said. “I learned that volunteering was a great way to support other students. By giving only one hour

of my time per week, I was able to give back to my community which has given me so much since I started college.”

Gonzalez, a senior majoring in public health with a minor in ethnic studies, is now manager of the Triton Food Pantry, where she oversees other volunteers with similar stories. These students and thousands more at UC San Diego will participate in Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week, an annual program where people across the country draw attention to the problems of hunger and homelessness. The event was first organized in 1975 and is always held the week before Thanksgiving.

The week at UC San Diego will kick off Nov. 11 with a fundraiser for the campus food pantry, which provides free food to students in need. Much of the week will be dedicated to making sure students are aware of resources like the Triton Food Pantry and the new [Basic Needs website](#), which connects students to essential resources required to thrive as a human being. This includes access to nutritious food, housing support and financial resources. As part of this initiative, the campus is launching The Hub, a new UC San Diego space that will offer students the opportunity to engage in and link to Basic Needs resources. The physical location is under construction at the Original Student Center to the left of the Triton Food Pantry.

“UC San Diego is committed to fostering a welcoming and supportive environment where students of all backgrounds can thrive,” said Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla. “We’re excited to join the millions of people around the country drawing attention to the issue of hunger and homelessness. It is especially moving to see our students take the lead on so many of our events and dedicate themselves to help other students in need.”

According to a recent [report by the California Homeless Youth Project](#) (PDF), which evaluates the types of services and programs provided to homeless and foster youth students in California’s higher education systems, UC San Diego is successful at serving these and other low-income students. The campus, along with many other UCs, scored high on providing services in the report’s key areas: free mental services, advising for at-risk youth, diversity centers/program, student housing, childcare services, programs for at-risk youth, food assistance and public transit access. UC San Diego received scores above 90 percent. This means that all or almost all of the supportive resources deemed highly important to homeless students are extensively present at the campus.

Juan González, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs said, “As a passionate campus community and ally to students, UC San Diego’s highest goal is to serve students with respect, offer referrals to on- and off-campus resources based on their basic needs, and increase accessibility to food, housing and financial resources.”

Below is a list of events coming up for Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week, all of which are free and open to the public. Throughout the week, students, faculty and staff are encouraged to donate canned goods, cereal/granola boxes, and hygiene items to the food pantry, or make an online donation. Click [here](#) to give to the Triton Food Pantry.

- **Chipotle Fundraiser, Nov. 11, 4 to 8 p.m., La Jolla Village Drive location:** This fundraiser for the Triton Food Pantry will allow students to donate with their purchases from the eatery.
- **Learn about Housing and Food Insecurity Tabling, Nov. 13, 1 to 3 p.m., Library Walk:** Students will be displaying resources available for students in need. In addition, there will be a CalFresh information available showcasing how the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is now more accessible to college students. CalFresh benefits can be accessed by using an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card and is used the same way a debit or ATM card is used. Free KIND bars will be distributed at the event.
- **Get to Know The Hub, Nov. 14, 1 to 2:30 p.m., First Floor of Original Student Center:** The Hub staff and interns will have a chance to meet and greet students. In addition, they will provide CalFresh information for students who are interested in enrolling in the food benefits program, as well as a cooking demo hosted by the Garden of Eden Organics farm in collaborative partnership with the Food Coop.
- **Tabling from the Triton Food Pantry, Nov. 15, noon to 3 p.m.:** Students will get to learn about the pantry and participate in the “paper plate campaign,” a platform for students to feel heard and share their experiences with food insecurity by writing them on paper plates.
- **Housing Town Hall, Nov. 16, 4 to 6 p.m., Village West Building 2 Room 2-C:** This town hall will include a table dedicated to off campus housing resources. In addition, students will discuss how to find affordable housing near campus.
- **Pop up Triton Food Pantry tabling, Nov. 17, noon to 3 p.m., Library Walk:** Students and staff from the Triton Food Pantry will be on Library Walk with a “pop-up” display where passersby can donate to the pantry and learn more about the center.

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