Speaker 1:

The Missouri State Journal, a weekly program, keeping you in touch with Missouri State University.

Emily Yeap:

In 2018, a [study](https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Wisconsin-HOPE-Lab-Still-Hungry-and-Homeless.pdf) published by researchers at Temple University and the Wisconsin HOPE Lab found that 36% of students on U.S. college campuses don't have enough to eat.

To help meet the food needs of its students, Missouri State University through its [Center for Community Engagement (CCE)](https://www.missouristate.edu/cce/) set up the Bear Pantry in 2019. I’m Emily Yeap.

Since then, the pantry has grown, moving to a larger space and offering fresh produce. CCE Director [Alex Johnson](https://search.missouristate.edu/people/alexjohnson) joins me today to offer an update.

Alex Johnson:

The Bear Pantry is an on-campus food access resource. Our two main goals are to address food insecurity amongst our college students and to also support student success.

Since the Bear Pantry started, we’ve had a great response rate from students who might be facing food insecurity whether on a short-term or episodic basis or more on a long-term basis. Since we began the food pantry, we’ve distributed about 25,000 pounds of food to folks. The more the word spreads about the resource for students, I think the more students will feel comfortable utilizing the resource. This academic year, so since August 2021, we’re consistently serving 360 MSU community members, and we call those people Bear Pantry members.

To become a member of the Bear Pantry, all we ask people to do is to fill out a quick form that lets us know demographic information and more information about how we can support you. And then, once that membership form is complete, you can shop in two different types of ways, both in person, so you can come to University Hall basement and work with our staff to navigate the space and grab what you need, or you can fill out an online shopping form if you want a more contactless curbside experience.

Emily Yeap:

What does the pantry provide?

Alex Johnson:

Folks who come into the pantry can expect to find nonperishable and perishable food items, and then non-food items or hygiene items, so soaps and socks and school supplies and things like that. So, we want to be able to not only provide healthy food options to our visitors, or “shoppers,” but also those other necessities.

Emily Yeap:

In addition to meeting food needs, the Bear Pantry offers students an opportunity to get involved.

Alex Johnson:

We like to think of the Bear Pantry as somewhat of a learning lab where students can put their passions into action. So, some examples of that are through our nutrition and dietic program on campus, we have dietic interns working with the Bear Pantry to help provide nutrition guides and recipes for students to utilize with food that is located in the pantry.

Another cool initiative that the Darr College of Agriculture helped support was the creation of a hydroponics system in the pantry. So, we’re now able to grow our own food in the Bear Pantry and provide more healthy options to folks. We also have a great partnership with the MSU Campus Garden and the students who run that initiative. So, the produce that is harvested from the MSU campus garden from students is then donated to the pantry to support fellow Bears.

Emily Yeap:

Support for the Bear Pantry from community members is always welcomed.

Alex Johnson:

There are a lot of ways to support the Bear Pantry and we’ve been really lucky to have the support from folks on campus and alumni friends off campus and community partners.

If people are wanting to donate items to us, I always tell folks to think of their pantry at home and things that they might like to eat. We supply all those to students, so if anybody wants to donate goods, they can bring them by the Bear Pantry. We're in University Hall basement on campus. Or, if anybody wants to send items our way, we have an Amazon wish list with items that we update weekly, and so, people can have those items sent directly to us. And then, another way they can support is through monetary donations and that money goes to the Missouri State Foundation, and through that money, we are able to provide sustainable, consistent food and hygiene items.

In the Center for Community E ngagement, one of our goals for students is to pursue active citizenship and to put their passions into action; put the public affairs mission into action. And I think if lack of food is a barrier for students, then we can’t expect them to bring their fullest to those experiences and to the community. And so, we appreciate all the support that folks give to the Bear Pantry, and we hope that the word spreads.

Emily Yeap:

To find out more about the Bear Pantry, visit [missouristate.edu/bearpantry](https://www.missouristate.edu/cce/bear-pantry.htm). I’m Emily Yeap for the Missouri State Journal.

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For more information, contact the Office of Strategic Communication at 417-836-6397. The Missouri State Journal is available online at ksmu.org.