



Policy in Practice

Leveraging an Improved Understanding of
Food Policy to Address Food Insecurity

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Introduction

- Originally from outside of Chicago
- Moved to Madison in the summer of 2018
- Beginning my final semester of a Master in Public Affairs program through the La Follette School of Public Affairs
 - Graduating in May in case anyone is hiring 😊
- Primary interest areas: Food Policy & Education Policy
 - Specifically: Food Security, Food in Schools, Food Waste

Project Overview

- Tasked with researching how relevant student organizations at UW-Madison understand and interact with food donation, food recovery, and food safety policies
 - If at all...
- Goals of my report:
 - Exploration of student food insecurity and existing efforts to address it
 - Review of existing policy environment
 - Recommendations
 - For student organizations
 - For university administrators

Primary Findings

- Student food insecurity is a widespread phenomenon
- Federal, state, and university policies around food donation, recovery, and safety are extensive and complicated
- Of the many student orgs at UW using food donation/recovery to address student food insecurity:
 - There is little interaction with or understanding of relevant policies
 - There is a lack of coordination and collaboration between:
 - The student orgs themselves
 - The student orgs and the administration
 - The student orgs and the community
- Relative to other universities, it appears that UW-Madison has not made as many quality efforts to study food insecurity prevalence on campus
- University office support for these student orgs is minimal and reactive

Widespread Student Food Insecurity

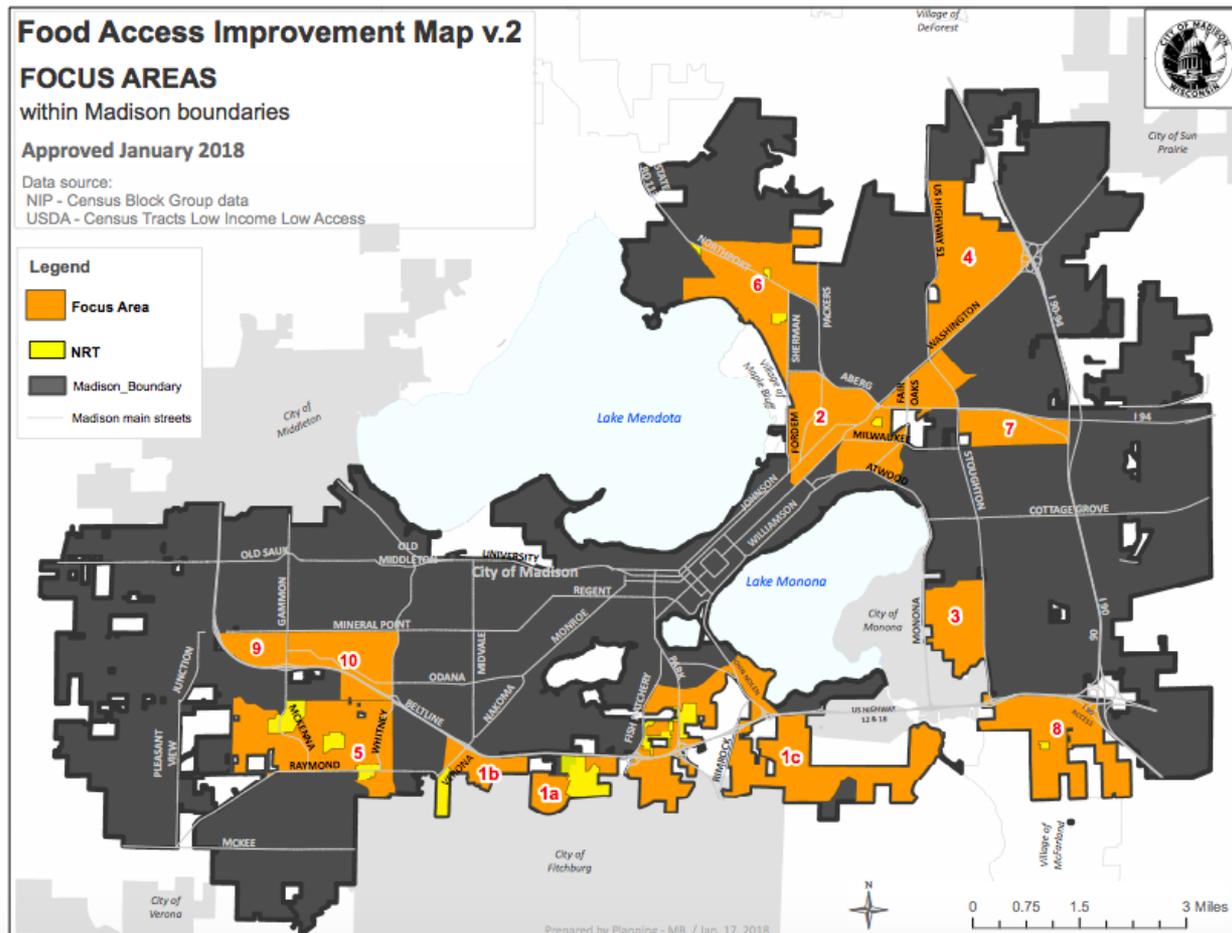
- No national consensus on the exact rate
 - That said, in 2018, the GAO found that 29% of all US undergrads had a low income and at least one other risk factor correlated with food insecurity
- In April 2019, a multi-year national survey of 167,000 students (from 68 four-year colleges and 101 community colleges) found:
 - 41% of respondents from four-year colleges and 48% of respondents from two-year colleges had experienced food insecurity in the previous 30 days
 - Even higher percentages reported worrying about running out of food or could not afford to eat balanced meals

Widespread Student Food Insecurity

- In Dane County:
 - 11% of residents experienced food insecurity in 2016 (according to County Health Rankings and Roadmaps data)
 - 10.1% of residents (or 52,980 people) were food insecure in 2017 (according to Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap study)
- Becomes a bit more challenging when trying to determine how those percentages vary at the city (Madison) level
- Becomes incredibly murky when you realize that these numbers likely don't reflect or account for residents attending UW-Madison (the students)

Widespread Student Food Insecurity

- January 2018 City of Madison Food Access Improvement Map



Widespread Student Food Insecurity

- At UW-Madison:
 - 12% of students could not always afford sufficient food, with some subgroups facing much higher rates (according to a 2016 Campus Climate Survey)
- These numbers are derived from a single survey question disseminated through a single survey
- This was the first time the University included any such survey question aimed at determining the prevalence of food-related hardship amongst students

Contending with a Convoluted Policy Environment

- Federal Policy
 - Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act
 - Food Date Labeling – lack of consensus
- State Policy
 - Food Donation and Liability Statute
 - Wisconsin Food Code
- University Policy
 - Campus Facilities Use Policies
 - Temporary Food Service Policy
 - Student Organization Code of Conduct

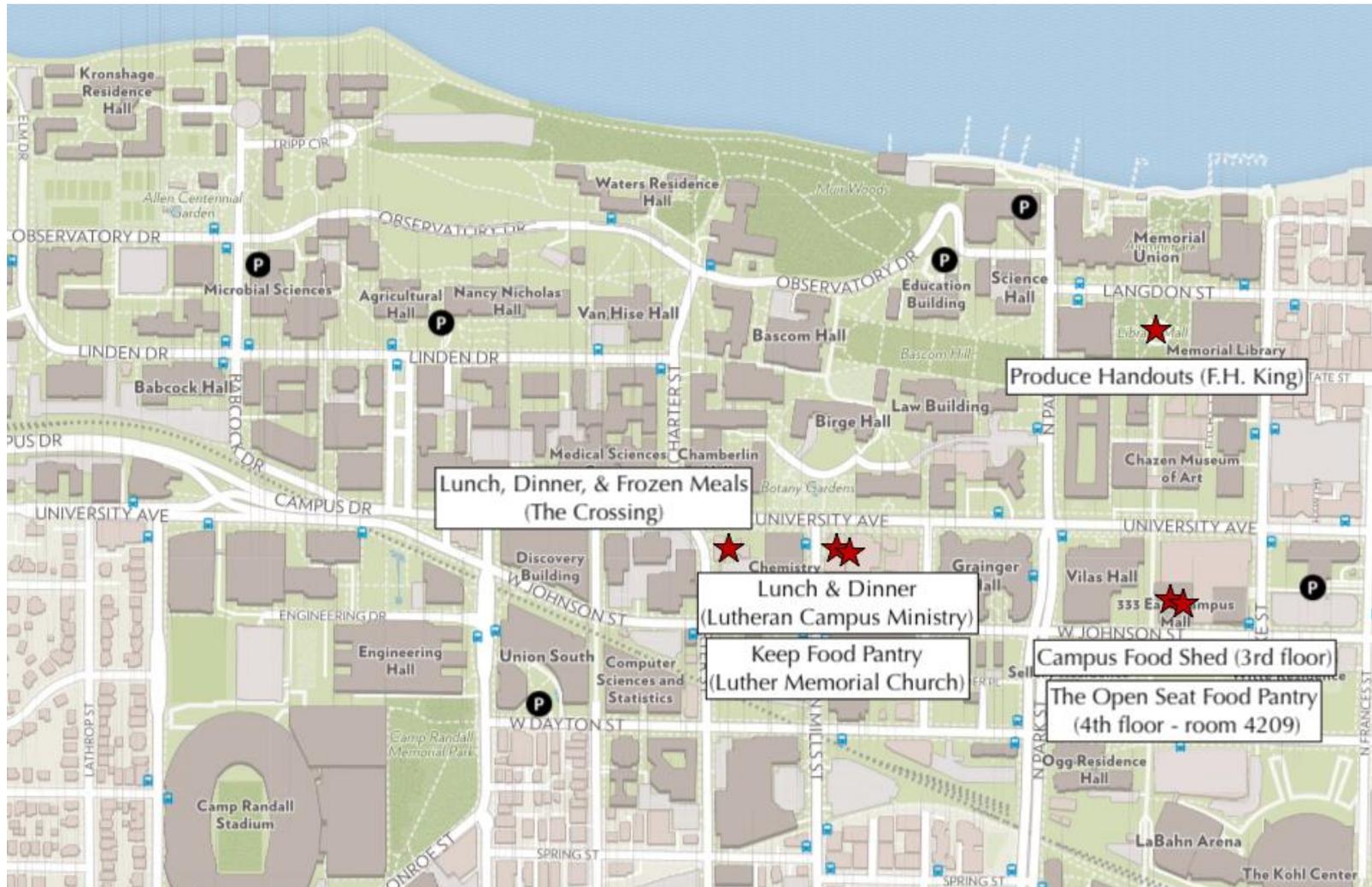
Low-Quality Administration Efforts

- To understand the prevalence of food insecurity on campus
 - Lack of comprehensive or continued data collection
- To assist student organizations in understanding relevant policies and addressing food insecurity
 - Interaction between relevant departments/offices and student orgs is minimal and reactive, at best
 - Primarily triggered when a complaint is filed or violation is documented
 - Lack of user-friendly, specific food donation/recovery/safety policy guides for student organizations to utilize/follow
 - Some student organizations even cite significant pushback from the University when trying to alleviate food insecurity

Looking Ahead: Recommendations

- Increase the emphasis on food security and related risk factors within campus-wide data collection measures
- Perform a cost-benefit analysis to examine the implications of a mandatory dining plan
- Create and require new students to participate in an online training module around food insecurity and available resources
- Implement an iteration of Swipe Out Hunger
- Increase the number of food donation/resource locations to ensure equitable access from all areas of campus
- Continue the collaboration with and promotion of UW-Extension and other community resources

Existing Campus Food Resource Locations





Thank you!

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