

Dear University Times,

My name is Jason Ong, and I am a rising senior at the University of Pittsburgh and president of the Pitt Pantry. Nationwide, over one-third of college students face food insecurity, defined as “a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food” according to the USDA. Access to adequate nutrition is crucial for a successful college experience, and allows students to focus on academic success, extracurricular activities, and career planning. The Pantry was founded in 2015 by the office of PittServes with the support of students concerned about this important issue. The Pitt Pantry is housed in the basement of the Bellefield Presbyterian Church across Fifth Avenue opposite Towers.

The Pantry is an almost entirely student run full shop-through food pantry. During the school year, we are open four days every week with afternoon and evening hours to accommodate student schedules. Anyone with a valid Pitt ID whose income falls below 150% of the federal poverty line is eligible to shop through the pantry two times every month.

Since its inception, the Pantry has grown from simply offering canned goods to now providing fresh produce and even household goods to the Pitt Community. We also participate in food recoveries during the school year through 412 Food Rescue and Food Recovery Heroes, where we can procure “grab-and-go” items like bagels, salads, sandwiches, and yogurt. Our trained staff members can also refer clients to help with textbooks, physical and mental health services, emergency housing, and other campus and community resources.

Given how centrally located the Pantry is on campus, visitors walking around Oakland will most likely walk past the Pantry without realizing it. I would definitely recommend that Pathfinders introduce the Pantry to prospective students as a basic needs resource to help lessen the stress of incoming students who might face food insecurity.

Sincerely,

Jason Ong

President of The Pitt Pantry