

STUDENT SENATE BILL 2024-1323

TITLE: Resolution Advocating for the Reinstatement of the Food for Fines Program Addressing Food Insecurity

AUTHOR(S): Senator Gabriela Prieto, Senator Noor Golesorkhi, Senator Andrew Sabadash, Senator Maximo Toledo

SPONSORS:

WHEREAS, the University of Florida has many programs that address food sustainability on and around the university, including programs such as Florida Fresh Dining, Gator CSA (Community Supported Agriculture), the Field and Fork Program, Campus Gardening, etc. [2]; and,

WHEREAS, food insecurity is a term defined by the USDA as when people have a lack of resources to access food and are not sure where they will be able to get their next meal [4]; and,

WHEREAS, recent research was conducted at the University of Florida, finding almost 20% of students reporting being food insecure and 25% of students having some anxiety relating to food accessibility [3]; and,

WHEREAS, proper nutrition is vital for students' overall well-being, academic performance, and mental functioning as proper nutrition lays the foundation for optimal brain function [8]; and,

WHEREAS, the Hitchcock Field and Fork Pantry provides any member of the UF community access to food essentials, including fresh produce, frozen meats, and bread, at no cost in order to fight food insecurity [7]; and,

WHEREAS, in 2021, 84% of enrolled University of Florida undergraduate students received financial aid in the form of grants [5]; and,

WHEREAS, a survey done in 2019 recorded that 25% of UF students experience anxiety about food shortages and through this students experiencing food insecurity are at a significant risk of disordered eating behaviors and a lower grade point average than students who are food secure [9]; and,

WHEREAS, the more financial stress students are under the less likely they are able to hold resources to seek after jobs as student loans average around \$33,000. Stress from student loans and financial instability is correlated with higher stress and anxiety [10]; and,

WHEREAS, the University of Florida issues around 60,000 parking citations annually, most around \$35 each, collecting over \$1,500,000 in fine payments in each 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 academic years [1]; and,

WHEREAS, many students that attend the University of Florida may not have the funds to pay for the fines due to other payments they have to make, including for housing, food, textbooks, tuition, activities and service fees, etc.; and,

WHEREAS, the University of Florida had a weeklong program called Food for Fines in 2018 that worked closely with the Field and Fork pantry, allowing students to pay their citations by donating food in the form of cans or other non-perishable foods to promote food sustainability for food insecure students, faculty, and staff [6]; and,

WHEREAS, in just that week, over 13,000 items were donated, forgiving over 2,500 citations, clearly demonstrating that this is a program students utilized and appreciated, both benefiting the food insecure students and the students issued the citations [6]; and,

WHEREAS, the University of Florida would benefit from the reinstatement of the Food for Fines program, for food insecure as well as financially insecure students; then,

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate recognizes a need to address food sustainability and food insecurity concerns at the University of Florida.

THEREFORE, LET IT FINALLY BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate urges the University of Florida to reinstate the Food for Fines program working with the Field and Fork Pantry to make sure that all students have access to the proper nutrition to foster success.

Proviso: A copy of this resolution shall be sent to University of Florida President Ben Sasse, Dean of Students Chris Summerlin, Student Body President Olivia Green, Student Body President-Elect John Brinkman, Field and Fork Pantry Operations Coordinator Danielle Guess, Campus Assistance and Resources for Empowerment Assistant Dean and Director Nadene Reynolds, UF IFAS Executive Assistant I Goldie J. King, UF IFAS Senior Associate Vice President for Operations Jeanna Mastrodicasa, UF IFAS Executive Communications Director Chris Moran

[1] <https://www.wuft.org/untold-florida/2017-12-15/find-out-florida-how-many-parking-citations-does-uf-hand-out-annually>

[2] <https://sustainable.ufl.edu/campus-initiatives/food/>

[3] <https://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/news/2019/06/05/uf-study-hunger-and-food-security-may-impact-college-student-health-and-academic-performance/>

[4] <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/food-insecurity>

[5] <https://datausa.io/profile/university/university-of-florida>

[6] <https://floridacollegeaccess.org/news/ufs-food-fines-program-brings-12870-donations/>

[7] <https://pantry.fieldandfork.ufl.edu/>

[8] <https://pediatricbrainfoundation.org/brain-nutrition/>

[9] <https://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/news/2019/06/05/uf-study-hunger-and-food-security-may-impact-college-student-health-and-academic-performance/#:~:text=About%2019%20percent%20of%20respondents,experienced%20anxiety%20about%20food%20shortage.>

[10]<https://news.warrington.ufl.edu/faculty-and-research/new-research-finds-student-loan-debt-hinders-students-chances-at-securing-a-full-time-job-upon-graduation/>