

Portion of Stockton University's Meal Plan Fee Funds New Food Assistance Program for Students

Student Senate Worked With Trustees, Administration on Program to Help
Students Afford Balanced Meals

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Tuesday, September 29, 2015

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Galloway Township, NJ – Stockton University students, the Board of Trustees and the administration created a new program starting this fall to help students whose financial challenges were affecting their dinner plates.

Stockton Student Senate President Carl Archut, Jr., a senior Liberal Studies major with concentrations in Leadership, Communication Studies and Hospitality Management, initially knew that a few of his fellow students were skipping meals or not eating a balanced diet due to a lack of money.

"I wanted to know if there were other students who were facing the same challenges," said the Paulsboro, NJ native. So last February, the Student Senate sent a food security survey to the student body to better understand students' need for food assistance.

About 20 percent of the student body responded. Seventy percent of those surveyed said they often or sometimes couldn't afford to eat balanced meals.

Student Trustee and Student Senate Finance Committee Chair Kiyle Osgood, who graduated in May, presented the survey results to the Board of Trustees last spring, and together they came to an agreement to designate one-half of 1 percent of the 2 percent increase in the meal plan fee to fund meals for students in need. This is expected to generate about \$30,000 for students this year.

Over the summer, Stockton's Food Assistance Program was established by Student Senate

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Stockton Food Assistance/ page 2

with the Office of Student Affairs, the Office of the Dean of Students, Stockton Affiliated Services, Incorporated (SASI), the Office of Development and Alumni Affairs, the Office of Service-Learning and the Office of Counseling and Health Services.

The program started in September and is currently helping about a dozen students.

“Some community members were actually shocked when they first heard about this initiative because they didn't know that this was an issue,” Archut said.

Students needing assistance are given vouchers that are valid at the N-Wing Student Restaurant. The program is designed to serve as a bridge until other resources are available. To assure that all options for students are considered, a review committee has been established, which will determine the best course of action for each student.

The program also has a counseling and educational component. “We're not only feeding these students, but we're educating them about financial literacy and other resources they can utilize to help get to a better place,” said Archut.

“Thanks to support from the university, we'll now be able to help those Ospreys who need it the most,” he added.

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