

The Food Bank at Columbia

582 Lerner Hall
Columbia University

Dear President Hsu,

We are writing to you today with regards to the current initiatives and anticipated developments of The Food Bank at Columbia, and to formally request funding from the Interschool Governing Board to help support these endeavors.

In a 2017 research report, the Food Bank for New York City (FBNYC) stated that the median operating budget for food pantries in this City is **less than \$25,000**. We are no exception to this statistic, and have actually been operating on only a fraction of this amount for the duration of the academic year. Our operations have been sustained on a shoestring budget, with paycheck-to-paycheck funding ensuring our weekly open hours run to serve our fellow students.

This is the reality that food pantries city- and nationwide, including The Food Bank at Columbia, face. With punitive federal policies in effect that are projected to severely assail the hunger safety net in the United States and in the State of New York, it is imperative that we seek funding from within the University's highest student governing bodies.

As such, we would like to be considered for a **\$10,000** disbursement from the IGB co-sponsorship fund. This funding is crucial for the continued growth and sustenance of The Food Bank at Columbia, and the reasons justifying this level of funding from the IGB are manifold.

1. One of our initiatives that will be imminently realized is our membership in the FBNYC network. In its 35 years of service to our City, the FBNYC has given out more than **1.2 billion free meals** to its guests, served over **1,800 charities**, and returned more than **\$1.069 billion** to working households through their tax preparation program.

Our membership with the FBNYC will be a seminal moment in our development history. In fact, this membership is imperative for our continued success in serving the entire Columbia University community. As a benefactor of FBNYC resources, we will have access to their online food distribution network, which will enable The Food Bank to procure food at a cost 30%-40% lower than our current expenditures. In addition to helping us achieve fiscal solvency, we will also be able to stock a more diverse selection of food items, including kosher and vegan options, allowing us to better accommodate for those in our school community with specific dietary restrictions. The money from the IGB would allow us to expand our food supply to include these items.

2. We are projected to hit our **1,000th disbursement** since our inception in May 2016 within the next month. As our presence on campus and the prevalence of college food insecurity continues to become known by more in the community,

we anticipate that our usage will only grow. As we move towards finals season and into the summer months when the dining halls are not running at regular hours, funding to keep our shelves stocked for disbursements during that time will be critical.

Furthermore, our disbursements have not been skewed to any particular degree level. From data we have been continuously collecting and analyzing since 23 August 2017, we have been able to determine that the greatest beneficiaries of The Food Bank have been the **School of General Studies** and the **Graduate School of Engineering and Applied Sciences**, representing **21.16%** and **43.89%** of our overall disbursements, respectively. In total, we have given out disbursements to **eighteen (18) out of the University's twenty (20) constituent institutions**.

3. The Food Bank at Columbia has been exceptional in all cases. We are the first and only student group at Columbia to have a permanent location in Lerner, and we are the first student-driven food pantry to be founded in the Ivy League.

But most importantly, we adamantly believe that accessibility to healthy and nourishing food, free of the stigma that food insecurity tragically entails, is a fundamental human right. That this must be realized at one of the greatest universities in the world is absolutely and unequivocally necessary in our perpetual work to create a more just and equitable school community. That we have fulfilled a tangible need for students of all backgrounds at many of Columbia's constituent institutions is indisputable.

Through financial support, the IGB will be recognized by the campus community as a leader in mitigating food insecurity at Columbia. With your help, the IGB will have an enduring stake in the continued legacy of The Food Bank at Columbia, and help to make certain that The Food Bank far outlives all of our times here at this University.

Sincerely Yours,



David A. Lee

Vice Chair of Development, The Food Bank at Columbia



Ramond Curtis

University Senator

Co-Founder, The Food Bank at Columbia

Michael Higgins (Chair) • Paulina Fein (Vice Chair of Communications) •
David Lee (Vice Chair of Development) • Jason Mares (Vice Chair of Finance) •
Miguel Yepes (Vice Chair of FLIP Collaborations) •
Leon Tsai (Vice Chair of Operations) • Sharanya Sivakumar (Vice Chair of Technology)