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Grant Brings Fresh Produce To UGA Student Pantry

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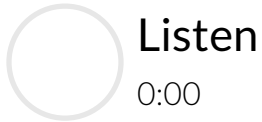
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UGA student Lily Dabbs carries fresh produce from the farm to be washed.

Nearly half of college students on campus experience food insecurity, according to a recent study (https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/HOPE_realcollege_National_report_digital.pdf). It's an issue University of Georgia students wanted to do something about.



UGA students John McGinnis, Lily Dabbs and Ava Parisi take us through the harvest and delivery process of bringing fresh produce to the UGA Student Food Pantry. One in five students struggles with food insecurity, McGinnis said.

Food insecurity can mean students don't have access to nutritious food, but many simply can't afford meals and must choose between paying rent or buying lunch.

That's why University of Georgia student and UGArden President John McGinnis applied for a grant this year to fund delivery and storage of fresh produce in the UGA food pantry.

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The grant ties back to the garden's mission in the community, McGinnis said.

"Specifically, the students in this case," he said.

UGArden's mission is to give back to the community by providing fresh produce as well as to teach about farming.

The \$5,409 grant came from the UGA Parents Leadership Council, which is a group of highly engaged parents.



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John McGinnis (left) and Lily Dabbs harvest kale and fennel from the UGAarden Club farm.

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“With that grant we're able to provide money for a new refrigerator for the food pantry located on campus as well as a refrigerator for UGAarden, which helps us out with storing the harvest that'll go toward the food pantry,” McGinnis said. “And the funds will also help cover some harvest materials that we'll be utilizing during the harvest process.”

Ava Parisi, a junior and the student pantry director, said the resource helps take one more thing off students' minds so they can focus on school instead of their hunger. The pantry is open to any student free of cost.

“It's completely confidential and anonymous,” Parisi said. “Anyone can come into the pantry and we have all sorts of food here. We have a lot of non-perishable items like pasta, and mac and cheese.”

They can return daily if they need to.

“If it's your first time coming to the pantry, basically what you'll do is, the volunteers will explain to you: just sign in on the tablet (with) your student I.D. number and you fill out a quick survey,” Parisi said. “And then you just kind of take whatever you want and you're allowed to head out.”

Parisi said many students had asked about fresh produce and getting a weekly harvest in has been pivotal for the pantry.

Lily Dabbs, a second-year geography major working toward a certificate in urban and metropolitan studies, delivers the harvest each week.

She works as an intern on the farm and she's a member of the UGArden Club.

On the farm, McGinnis and Dabbs prepare for harvest by washing the containers and sanitizing them with bleach.

After harvesting kale, fennel, kohlrabi, carrots or whatever is in season, the students wash the dirt off and prepare to deliver produce to the community.

“The (UGA) pantry’s closed this summer but will be open again by fall,” McGinnins said.

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