

University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well

University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well

Campus News Archive

Campus News, Newsletters, and Events

11-13-2023

UMN Morris Included in Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Food Justice Initiative Funding

Communications and Marketing

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.morris.umn.edu/urel_news

Recommended Citation

Communications and Marketing, "UMN Morris Included in Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Food Justice Initiative Funding" (2023). *Campus News Archive*. 3496.

https://digitalcommons.morris.umn.edu/urel_news/3496

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Campus News, Newsletters, and Events at University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well. It has been accepted for inclusion in Campus News Archive by an authorized administrator of University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well. For more information, please contact skulann@morris.umn.edu.

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
MORRIS

UMN Morris included in Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Food Justice Initiative funding

(November 13, 2023) Efforts to increase access to healthy, affordable, and culturally relevant foods at the University of Minnesota Morris recently got a boost from the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota.

UMN Morris is one of 12 organizations to receive funding from the Center's Food Justice Initiative.

The funds will be used to advance access to healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate foods without barriers for BIPOC and low-income students and rural community members, as well as grow the next generation of food sovereignty leaders.

Good food access is generally defined as having the capacity to affordably obtain and make use of foods that are healthy and culturally appropriate.

In a recent University of Minnesota survey, nearly one in five (19.7%) Morris students reported worrying about whether their food would run out before they had money to buy more. More than 13 percent reported experiencing a food shortage in the prior year.. Additionally, Minnesota and the Morris student population are becoming increasingly culturally diverse, with 40% of Morris students identifying as a member of a racial or ethnic population historically underrepresented in higher education.

Clement Loo, assistant professor of environmental studies and student success coordinator in the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Intercultural Programs is coordinating the UMN Morris effort to increase access to healthy food on campus. He says that students in Morris report the two primary barriers to food access are a lack of availability of affordable cultural foods on campus or in the community, and a lack of culinary or food processing/storage knowledge.

Efforts to improve the availability of cultural foods on the Morris campus include developing a partnership with the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe to source traditional foods, such as elk and deer; purchasing equipment to support food distribution, including to the campus dining service; offering co-curricular educational and cultural programming on processing, storing/preserving, and cooking; and facilitating the development of regional networks of local food shelves,

nonprofits, and community organizations with folks who might be able to source cultural foods which are otherwise hard to get affordably in the area.

The initiative's campus partners, community collaborators such as the Stevens County Food Shelf, a student leadership team, and a new Basic Needs Navigator will support project operations, coordinate campus food distribution activities, and expand campus food resources.

"Communities most impacted by health inequities are the best equipped to lead work to overcome the systemic barriers faced in accessing healthy food," said Sarah Senseman, Director of Tobacco Settlement Operations and Community Funding at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota. "Investing in community-led efforts to address food insecurity, increase food sovereignty, and support greater participation in decision making on policies related to food justice are critical to advancing racial and health equity."

About the Food Justice Funding Initiative

The Food Justice Funding Initiative is a multi-year initiative, designed to advance food justice by ensuring access to healthy, affordable, and culturally relevant foods without barriers. Funded projects reflect community-led strategies to address food insecurity and support Black, Indigenous, Latine, Asian Pacific Islanders, and people of color (BIPOC) leaders in creating equitable change to local food systems.