



Food for Thought Letters DIY Project

Civic Circle Area: Listen and Learn, Voice

The impact of COVID-19 continues to change our daily lives and routines, but volunteering and civic engagement are just as important as ever. This project can be modified to adhere to social distancing guidelines set by local and national authorities, to do virtually, or to do at home and deliver via mail or drop off.

Many college students experience food insecurity and hunger every year. Compared to students at four-year colleges and universities, students attending community colleges are particularly likely face food insecurity. Use your voice and write letters to your government representatives asking them to help end food insecurity among community college students.

Why Is It Important?

The national average of food insecurity in the United States with household members attending four-year colleges and vocational education were around the national average (11.2 and 13.5 percent) in 2015, according to [a study conducted by the Urban Institute](#). The study also noted an interesting observation between 2008 and 2014: Food insecurity in households with members attending two-year colleges was much higher during the Great Recession, peaking at 23.8 percent in 2012. In 2015, their rate of food insecurity returned to 13.3 percent, near the national average.

In many cases, food insecurity on two-year college campuses is overlooked. In some cases, the students at community colleges are balancing unique life circumstances with part-time or full-time work and childcare along with their course load. Due to governmental policies relating to food assistance, these students are not always eligible for help, and hunger then becomes an additional barrier to learning.

What You Need:

- Paper
- Pen
- Envelopes
- Stamps
- Addresses of your government officials
- Editor (everyone should have their work reviewed)

Steps:

1. Start by researching the issue. Look for studies, such as the one conducted by the Urban Institute, that explain the issue and point to potential policy solutions.
2. Find the addresses for your officials. Each state has two senators, and their contact information can be found at [senate.gov](#). To find your representatives, you will need to search for the person representing your district within your state. You can go to [house.gov](#) and type in your zip code in the section that says, "Find Your Representative."



3. Find a business template online and follow it to ensure the letter is professionally formatted.
4. In your letter do the following:
 1. Use the appropriate salutation for the leader to who you are writing.
 2. Explain who you are and why you are writing.
 3. Provide details about why you are writing, using facts provided from legitimate and recent studies and sources you found in your research. You can also use an emotional appeal, if you have a story that represents why you are writing and supports the facts you share.
 4. Be direct and request that they take a specific action. For example, change policies regarding eligibility for SNAP to take into considerations the unique experiences of households with 2-year college students; or, expand the nutritional lunch programs to include 2-year colleges.
5. Ask a mentor to edit your letter.
6. Address the envelope and apply the correct postage before putting it in a post box.

Reflection Questions:

- Why do you think it is important to think students at two-year colleges experienced higher levels of food insecurity during the recessions and years after than students at four-years colleges?
- Why do you think it is important to write letters to elected officials, even if you are not of voting age?
- What are other issues that you might consider writing letters to officials in an effort to elicit change?