OHIO recognizes that some students may not have enough to eat on a regular basis. The CATS’ CUPBOARD food pantry provides students access to fresh, frozen, and shelf-stable food options to help prevent hunger.
INTRODUCTION

The Cats’ Cupboard, Ohio University’s food pantry, is an essential support service for students experiencing food insecurity. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, students would swipe into the pantry to stock up on supplies on an as-needed basis. When social distancing protocols began and the University closed the building that housed the Cats’ Cupboard, the pantry transitioned to curbside pick-up for the duration of spring and summer 2020. During this time, students signed up to receive food every two weeks. When Baker University Center reopened for fall semester, the pantry continued to operate by appointment with pre-ordered and pre-packed bags of supplies.

400+
STUDENTS SERVED

In spring and summer, over 200 people were served by the pantry. That number increased to over 400 in fall semester of 2020.

30–50
POUNDS OF FOOD

Every two weeks, 30–50 pounds of food were served to students. In a survey conducted during summer 2020, pantry users revealed that they rely on the pantry to ensure that they don’t have to skip meals, or to put money toward paying for bills instead of groceries.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- Southeast Ohio Food Bank
- Community Food Initiatives
- Culinary Services
- Atrium Café – College of Health Sciences and Professions
- Athens County Food Pantry
- Ohio University Foundation
- OHIO Student Farm
- International Student Task Force
The International Student Task Force (ISTF) was created by a team of international students in March of 2020. They partnered with Athens County leadership, community members and Ohio University leadership to alleviate the living hardships experienced by international students due to the pandemic.

Through ISTF advocacy, the Cats’ Cupboard was filled with necessary food items, along with receiving a $2,000 cash donation from the Athens Food Pantry, a donation of 120 gift cards (valued at $1,000) from local grocery shops by the Rotary Club of Athens, as well as receiving food items from donation drives held by the Rotary Club.

ISTF not only encouraged food donations to Cats’ Cupboard, but through its advocacy efforts, the International Student Emergency Relief Fund was created by OHIO. A $10,000 seed gift was donated by the Athens County Foundation, which has helped students with rent and other major costs caused by the pandemic.

80% of pantry users are international students
THE IMPACT

In summer of 2020, a survey of Cats’ Cupboard users was conducted to learn about the food pantry’s impact on students during the pandemic. The survey results found:

- 87% of users were prevented from going hungry.
- 78% did not have to skip meals.
- 27% had never used Cats’ Cupboard before COVID-19.
- 21% increased their use of the pantry since the pandemic.
- 96% said Cats’ Cupboard made them feel like they were part of the Ohio University community.

“BEFORE USING THE FOOD PANTRY, IT WAS OVERWHELMING TO BALANCE THE STRESS OF MONEY FOR FOOD WITH OTHER BILLS, IN ADDITION TO DEALING WITH STRESS FROM SCHOOL. SINCE UTILIZING THE PANTRY, I’VE BEEN ABLE TO EFFECTIVELY CONCENTRATE ON MY STUDIES.”