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The following proposal for the 2021 Societal Impact Award is submitted to the Southern Business Administration Association by Lisa A. Michocki on behalf of the College of Business and Economics at Towson University and endorsed by Dean Shohreh Kaynama ([skaynama@towson.edu](mailto:skaynama@towson.edu)).

Thank you,

Lisa A. Michocki

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## ***ENDING HUNGER IS OUR BUSINESS***

*Making an impact on campus and in the community to address Food Insecurities.*

### **Program Summary**

Over the years, the College of Business and Economics (CBE) has made an impact in the Baltimore region by volunteering at various non-profit organizations. These efforts have incorporated students, faculty and staff participating in community service and fundraising initiatives. In fall 2020, the Student Leadership Council (SLC), a group of rising leaders of student organizations in the college, implemented a plan to identify a cause that focuses on college-wide community engagement among their student organizations, faculty, staff and the campus at large. After research and discussion, the students decided to address Food Insecurities and Hunger Awareness on campus and in the community. The SLC devoted much of spring 2021, to raising awareness on campus about the topic; culminating with a fundraising event.

The goals of creating a college-wide initiative include developing a cohesive, strategic approach for community engagement, tying service and fundraising to a student and faculty driven framework and aligning with the mission of the college by sustaining a culture of philanthropy, equity and inclusion that results in a positive societal impact. To accomplish these goals, three students completed a Special Projects Internship in summer 2021 where they researched organizations associated with Food Insecurities, identified ways to support these organizations and created a plan for implementation.

### **Innovation**

Three aspects to this initiative contribute to its uniqueness: experiential learning, large-scale engagement opportunities and long-term sustainability.

### **Experiential Learning**

Upon identifying a cause to support, creation and implementation were critical stages of the planning process. To foster a positive learning environment, the college created a Special Projects Internship which was advertised across campus. Three students were selected and were awarded scholarships. The

students were mentored throughout the 120 hour, 10-week internship, during which they developed a proposal for addressing Food Insecurities in the community and presented it to the dean’s office and community partners. The experience provided an opportunity for the students to apply knowledge gained in the classroom, enhance critical thinking and practice their communication skills.

Large-scale Engagement Opportunity

The college has approximately 3,000 students and 120 faculty and staff. In the first year of the initiative, the participants will primarily include students involved in CBE student organizations, faculty and staff. However, there is an opportunity for exponential growth year over year. As the initiative expands and community service opportunities increase, the need for additional participants is expected to grow. The stark reality is - Food Insecurities is not a cause that will be resolved in the near future. This plan includes a five-year commitment to the community with end of year assessment to ensure continuous improvement. In the first year, the initiative will support five organizations including non-profit, K-12 and on-campus partnerships, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Large Scale Engagement Opportunities**

| PARTNERSHIPS  | ENGAGEMENT   | IMPACT   |
|---|--|--|
| MD Food Bank (Non-profit partners)                                  | Students, faculty and staff will volunteer on-site at the Food Bank and one of its produce contributors, <i>First Fruits Farm</i> .  | Contributing to the packaging of 40 million + meals needed to address food insecurities in MD while learning about food distribution and supply chain. |
| Baltimore Hunger Project & Student Support Network (K-12 partners)  | Students will host a <i>Packing Party</i> for CBE organizations to create Weekend and Goody Snack Bags.  | Assembling weekend meals for some of the 1,500+ students registered for free and reduced lunches while developing teamwork and networking skills.      |
| TU Food Insecurities and FoodShare Programs (Cross Campus partners) | Students, faculty and staff will coordinate a <i>Canned Food Drive Competition</i> among the 18 active student organizations to win a pizza party for their student group. | Donating all canned foods collected to the two FoodShare programs on TU’s campus fostering organizational and persuasive communication skills.         |

## Long-term Sustainability

The need for food is vast. Beginning on campus and spreading into the community, Food Insecurities is a cause that endures long-term sustainability. The goal is to commit to a five-year program that addresses this societal issue in the community, among our schools and in our backyard. To do this, the initial participants will consist of rising leaders within the college, then expand into the general student body and ultimately seep into the TU campus community.

### **Societal Impact**

Hosted each semester and driven by the SLC, community service and fundraising events along with a Food Insecurities campaign will serve as opportunities for students, faculty and staff to get involved. The organizations chosen for partnership in the first year are the Maryland Food Bank, First Fruits Farm, Baltimore Hunger Project, Student Support Network and Towson University Food Insecurities and FoodShare Programs. To support these organizations, there will be three on-site days of service, one large-scale fundraiser and a canned food drive.

The Baltimore Hunger Project alone provides 1,500 meals to children across Baltimore City and Baltimore County Schools (Baltimore Hunger Project). As shown in Table 1, students in the CBE will be making Goody Bags and Weekend Snack Bags to aid in feeding children who depend on free and reduced lunches during the week. The first year goal is to make enough snack bags to support students registered in the program while creating a strategy to work directly with one area elementary school in the second year. As donations increase, more schools and their students will benefit from the work CBE students are doing. According to the Maryland Food Bank, 39% of Maryland households are likely to be food insecure. One way this initiative supports the Maryland Food Bank in decreasing that population is by volunteering at their warehouse and packaging food for vulnerable populations.

On Towson University's campus, students are not the only ones seeking a food source. Faculty and staff also face this issue, making the need for non-perishable food items even more important. A canned food

drive coordinated among the student organizations in the college will contribute to two university FoodShare programs. After a need assessment is conducted, any excessive donations will be given to local charities such as non-profits and faith-based organizations.

### **Beyond Towson University**

According to the USDA, food insecurity affects 13.7 million households in the United States. If there are students, faculty and staff...there is a way! This plan is applicable to all universities because the reality is - Food Insecurities resides in the entire country, in every state, in every county and in every school. With only three students, planning and implementation can take place. There are three steps to successfully creating a Societal Impact Initiative to address Food Insecurities: develop an internship or research project, identify a clear set of project expectations that align with the goals of the college and/or university, and set a realistic timeline to get involved.