



Food & Nutrition Policy

Sam Houston State University

Food and Nutrition Policy

The Mission of the Sam Houston State University Food Pantry (SHSU-FP) is to support Sam Houston State University (SHSU) students who experience food insecurity, to encourage an educational understanding of food insecurity, and to provide a space for students to volunteer and network with their peers. Currently, the Food Pantry is under the direction of Dr. Kathleen Gilbert and operated by work-study students, Dietetic Interns, and volunteers from the Food Pantry SHSU student organization.

The purpose of this Food and Nutrition Policy is to guide the commitment of the SHSU-FP to provide healthful foods, nutrition education, and health promotion to the SHSU student body. Our nutrition policy communicates to students, affiliated pantries and other agencies, donors, government programs and the community at large that we are committed to providing healthful foods to SHSU students.

The SHSU-FP has served the SHSU student body and the community for several years. In recent years, the food pantry has become aware of the increasing rates of obesity and its associated co-morbidities during emerging adulthood.^{1,2} SHSU-FP is firmly committed to providing healthful foods to students to help prevent these diet-related conditions.

In a strategic effort to improve the quality of the food made available to students and provide health promotion, we have recently strengthened our partnerships with the Houston Food Bank (HFB) and the American Heart Association (AHA).

We want our student body to know that their health concerns, food, and cultural preferences are among our highest considerations in acquiring more healthful food. We recognize the challenges associated with the cost of nutritious food items, the ability to access wholesome, local foods, and the many other considerations affecting what students want and need.

We recognize the increasing role of the SHSU-FP in providing healthful foods to the student body. Our policy to procure and distribute foods of high nutritional quality demonstrates to the student body and the University that we take our role and responsibility seriously.

Food Donations, Orders, and Purchases

The SHSU-FB policy applies to all foods acquired by the food bank, including foods and beverages donated by food manufacturers, distributors, retailers, organizations, producers/growers, and community members, foods and beverages obtained from government programs, and foods and beverages purchased by the food bank.

This policy centers on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, the Healthy Eating Research (HER) Nutrition Guidelines for the Charitable Food System³, and client-food preference research. In accordance with this nutrition policy, we aim to actively seek, procure and distribute the following foods when appropriate and possible:

Table 1: Healthy Eating Research Nutrition Guidelines for the Charitable Food System³, examples of Choose Often foods that will be prioritized at SHSU Food Pantry.

Category	Choose Often
Fruit and Vegetables	Fresh, frozen and canned fruits and vegetables with no added sugar or sodium; low sodium vegetables; fruit canned in 100% juice or in water
Grains	Whole grains (quinoa, brown rice, barley); whole wheat pasta; whole grain breads; whole grain cereal with ≤ 6 grams added sugar; plain oatmeal
Protein	Dried beans; low-sodium canned beans; some nut butters; nuts; fresh poultry; fish; eggs; tofu; low-sodium canned tuna; canned salmon
Dairy	Fat-free or low-fat unsweetened yogurt; skim, 1% and 2% milk; fat-free and reduced fat cheeses; light sour cream
Non-Dairy Alternatives	Unsweetened almond, rice, cashew, oat and pea milk; unsweetened soy, almond, rice, cashew and oat milk yogurts; some plain non-dairy alternative products with ≤ 6 g of added sugar
Beverages	Plain water; flavored and unflavored sparkling water; plain coffee; unsweetened tea

Healthful Foods to Prioritize in This Policy

Food pantry research clearly indicates that the people served prefer receiving healthful foods—particularly fresh fruits and vegetables. Although our policy aims to increase all of the “Choose Often” foods outlined in the HER Nutrition Guidelines, we will put considerable effort and emphasis initially on procuring more fresh fruits and vegetables, particularly those that are more colorful, nutrient-dense varieties.

Foods to Deprioritize at SHSU Food Pantry

The HER Nutrition Guidelines recommend “Choose Rarely” foods and beverages that contribute mainly saturated fat, sodium and added sugar. Such foods tend to be high in calories and low in nutrients. This nutrition policy aims to deprioritize the procurement and distribution by food banks of the “Choose Rarely” foods and beverages as outlined in the HER Nutrition Guidelines. When appropriate and possible, we will not actively seek or procure foods in this category and will work toward reducing our inventory of these types of items:

Table 2: Healthy Eating Research Nutrition Guidelines for the Charitable Food System³, examples of Choose Rarely foods that will be deprioritized at SHSU Food Pantry.

Category	Choose Rarely
Processed/packaged snacks	Chips (corn, potato, puffed cheese, tortilla; not including lower/reduced fat or baked), Crackers (not including lower/reduced fat or baked), French fries, Onion rings, Pork rinds, Bars (including granola, cereal, energy, snack bars)

Desserts	Cakes, Candy, Chocolate, Cookies, Donuts, Frozen desserts, Ice cream, Fruit snacks, Muffins, Pastries, Pies, Popsicles, Pudding
Sugar-sweetened beverages	Energy drinks (Full Throttle Energy Drink®, Monster Energy Drink®, Mountain Dew AMP Energy Drink®, Red Bull Energy Drinks, Rockstar Energy Drink®), Fruit drinks (coconut water with caloric sweetener, fruit-flavored drink or water with caloric sweetener, fruit nectars, fruit punch, fruit smoothies with caloric sweetener), Sodas (regular soft drinks (not including diet), sugar cane beverage, sugar-sweetened carbonated water), Sports drinks (Gatorade Sports Drinks®, Powerade Sports Drink®), Sweetened coffees (blended iced coffee drinks, café mocha, presweetened powdered coffee mix, pre-sweetened ready-to-drink coffee), Sweetened teas (pre-sweetened ready-to-drink tea, pre-sweetened tea mix). Sweetened shakes and smoothies (ready-to-drink milkshakes, Eggnog, Vitamin-enhanced waters)

Our priority will be to shift purchasing resources towards cooking staples, items on the “Choose Often” list of the HER guidelines, and other dry international goods. We will avoid purchasing “Choose Rarely” foods with high added sugar content, such as soda and candy.

Our overall nutrition commitment to our student body is that 85% of all food orders, purchases and targeted donations will be nutritionally dense foods.

Administration, Implementation and Review

This policy will take effect on 9/1/2023 at which time it will become part of the Food Pantry’s organizational policies and procedures. The Director of the Food Pantry is responsible for an annual review of this policy with staff in order to keep it up to date with community needs. All new staff and volunteers will be provided an orientation to the policy by either the Director or a Manager.

This policy is in effect as of [September 1, 2023]

Signed:

Dr. Kathleen Gilbert
Director, Food Pantry

1. Greene GW, Schembre SM, White AA, Hoerr SL, Lohse B, Shoff S, Horacek T, Riebe D, Patterson J, Phillips BW, Kattelman KK, Blissmer B. Identifying clusters of college students at elevated health risk based on eating and exercise behaviors and psychosocial determinants of body weight. *J Am Diet Assoc.* 2011 Mar;111(3):394-400. doi: 10.1016/j.jada.2010.11.011. PMID: 21338738.
2. Kansra AR, Lakkunarajah S, Jay MS. Childhood and Adolescent Obesity: A Review. *Front Pediatr.* 2021 Jan 12;8:581461. doi: 10.3389/fped.2020.581461. PMID: 33511092; PMCID: PMC7835259.
3. Healthy Eating Research A National Program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (https://healthyeatingresearch.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Nutrition-Guideline-Expert-Panel_one-pager2.pdf) Accessed: 03/07/2023