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2016

RamPantry: A Model for Sustainability

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RamPantry: A Model for Sustainability

TEAM MEMBERS

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Nathan Hanger, Creative Director, University Marketing, Division of University Relations

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Laura Napky, Program Coordinator, School of Engineering

Stephanie Nickerson, Senior IT Auditor, Audit & Compliance Services

Project Sponsor: Mitzi Lee, Director of Real Estate Services

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The VCU RamPantry: Sustainability project's mission is to develop a comprehensive system to foster a sustainable food pantry model which will reduce food insecurity among VCU students. Food insecurity can affect anyone, whether they are an on-campus student who has run out of meal swipes or an off-campus student who is facing a financially challenging time. Food insecurity may cause anxiety, depression, poor judgement, and may lead to larger problems related to physical health due to lack of nutrition. All of these factors can negatively impact student retention. A sustainable food pantry can mitigate these risks by providing basic food items to students in need.

There is a community need for such a program, but the need for this service is greater than what the current RamPantry structure can support. For this project, our team will present a 3-year proposed plan which will include: seeking to find a more permanent location for the organization; assisting with development of operations and procedural manuals; and creating development strategy to increase donations while bringing this need to the attention of the Richmond community. While there are many VCU students who can benefit from RamPantry, we also have many community members who can contribute in a number of ways including the use of Volunteer Service/Community Service leave and hosting departmental food drives.

QUEST FOR DISTINCTION

This project embraces all three themes from Quest for Distinction.

Theme I: Become a leader among national research universities in providing all students with high-quality learning/living experiences focused on inquiry, discovery and innovation in a global environment. RamPantry has the opportunity to become a national model and leader in the movement to address food insecurities among college students. RamPantry will support student success by providing food insecure students with access to healthy food options.

Theme II: Attain distinction as a fully integrated urban, public research university through contributions in human health, research, scholarship and creative expression that advance knowledge and enhance the quality of life. The sustainability of RamPantry focuses on contributions to human health through providing food access to VCU students facing food insecurities. In addition, RamPantry has the potential to expand services to link research to their pantry services through nutritional education seminars as well as experiential learning through internships and service learning programs.

Theme III: Become a national model for community engagement and regional impact. RamPantry will provide opportunities for students, faculty, and staff from multiple disciplines to connect

through meaningful service opportunities. RamPantry identified the needs of the VCU student community and is taking action to assist in addressing food insecurities within the VCU student community.

PROJECT GOALS

1. To propose a new location for RamPantry.
2. To enhance the operations and procedural manual.
3. To create a strategy to increase donations (both financial and physical).

PROJECT STRATEGIES

Magnificent Seven (M7) started the discussions of sustainability with Terrence Walker, the pantry advisor, to determine his thoughts on the sustainability project and to discuss key issues surrounding RamPantry. Next the team members volunteered their time at RamPantry to discover first-hand how the pantry is currently operating. While meeting with key stakeholders, reviewing data on RamPantry, and researching other campus pantries throughout the nation, Team Magnificent Seven determined RamPantry needed a model of sustainability to meet the needs of the population and truly follow the mission of the organization. The research findings indicated an opportunity for VCU RamPantry to pave the way as a national model for college pantries and become a model for sustainability as well. In pursuit of this sustainability goal, three areas of growth were determined for RamPantry (1) physical space; (2) operations / procedural manuals; and (3) philanthropy (financial and physical). In working with project sponsor, Mitzi Lee, M7 determined a potential location for RamPantry, giving easier accessibility into the pantry and more storage solutions for the donated food/supplies.

ACTION STEPS

- Met with Terrence Walker, advisor for RamPantry, to determine greatest needs.
- Volunteered at RamPantry to personally experience pantry operations.
- Met with Business Consultant, Susan Wilkes, to ensure that our project goals aligned with a recently appointed Steering Committee for RamPantry.
- Met with Lynn Pelco, Division of Community Engagement.
- Established three areas of opportunity related to the sustainability of RamPantry.
- Presented team findings/suggestions and received feedback from the Steering Committee.
- Met with Mitzi Lee, VCU Real Estate, to determine relocation options.
- Met with Charles Klink, Division of Student Affairs, to provide update and ensure alignment with Student Affairs objectives.
- Once RamPantry is relocated, consider expanding the hours of operation and re-evaluate the programs offered at the pantry.

OUTCOME

The goal of M7's project is to support the work that the students have done over the years to establish RamPantry by providing a three-year plan to support the sustainability of the pantry. The primary project outcomes included the identification of Sally Belle's as a viable option for the new RamPantry location, an updated operations / procedural manual, and strategies for increased philanthropy.

SUSTAINABILITY

In order for RamPantry to be sustainable, M7 suggests transitioning the pantry from a student organization to the Division of Student Affairs. Working with other groups within the Division will be a tremendous resource for RamPantry as this could give a continuous opportunity for volunteers while providing our student population with an additional meaningful volunteer

opportunity. Lastly, establishing a full-time director for the pantry will allow for continual management of donor/sponsor relations, as well as monitoring the volunteer and community partnerships.

FINANCING AND RESOURCES

It is important to note that this is not a startup project, but rather an initiative to support sustainability of an existing program at VCU. The expenses noted below are estimates.

	Item Description	Justification	Cost
1.	University Computer Center Server Hosting & Maintenance	An electronic client intake form and inventory system are currently being developed for RamPantry. The server housing the systems and data will need to be hosted at UCC.	\$2,400
2.	Donation Transport Vehicle	RamPantry currently does not have a method for picking up donations or distributing excess donation to the community. A vehicle will enable them to accomplish both tasks	\$20,000
3.	Update Sally Belle's	Current location will need to be refreshed to include paint, additional shelving, and refrigeration.	\$25,000
Total			\$47,400

All overhead costs incurred from moving RamPantry to Sally Belle's would fall under the Division of Student Affairs per the team's recommendations of the reorganization of RamPantry. The cost of a vehicle does not include insurance or ongoing operation and maintenance costs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is Team Magnificent Seven's recommendation that RamPantry become a part of the Division of Student Affairs. This will allow for a full-time director to oversee the operations and develop ongoing relationships with the food partners. With a full-time position, the pantry will be able to sustain the matriculation of students due to graduation. It is also recommended the pantry be relocated to the old Sally Belle building, located at 708 West Grace Street on the Monroe Park campus. This new location will allow more visitors to the pantry at one time, as well as allow for larger food donation deliveries.

FINAL PITCH

VCU's RamPantry has the potential to become a national model and a leader in the movement to address food insecurity issues among college students. With the recommendations provided by our team, paired with the steering committee recommendations, Team Magnificent Seven believes RamPantry can truly live out its mission for years to come.



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RamPantry
A model for sustainability



Food insecurity

Food insecurity

The lack of access, at times, to enough food for all household members

1 in 6
Americans face hunger.

49 million
Americans struggle to put food on the table.

900,000

Virginians don't know where their next meal will come from.

57%

RamPantry

A model for sustainability

Operations

Philanthropy

Space

Quest

for Distinction



The Magnificent Seven

Carrie Connolly, Honors College

TyRuben Ellingson, School of Arts

Nathan Hanger, University Relations

Kasey Mattison, Athletics

Laura Napky, School of Engineering

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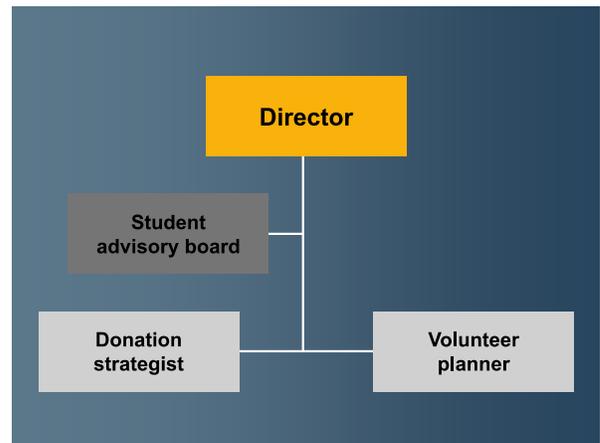
Stephanie Nickerson, Audit and Compliance Services

Team sponsor Mitzi Lee, Real Estate Services



- ## Our discovery
- Volunteered
 - Partnered with the steering committee
 - Met with student organization leadership
 - Engaged School of Business

- ## Opportunities
- Year-round coverage
 - Institutional support/staff
 - Donor relations
 - Inventory management / manual



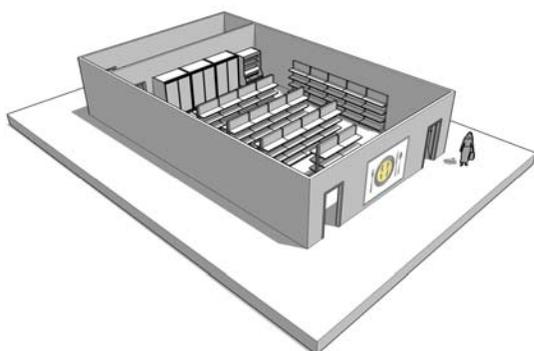
- ## Operations manual
- Volunteer responsibilities
 - University compliance
 - Staff/volunteer management
 - Inventory management

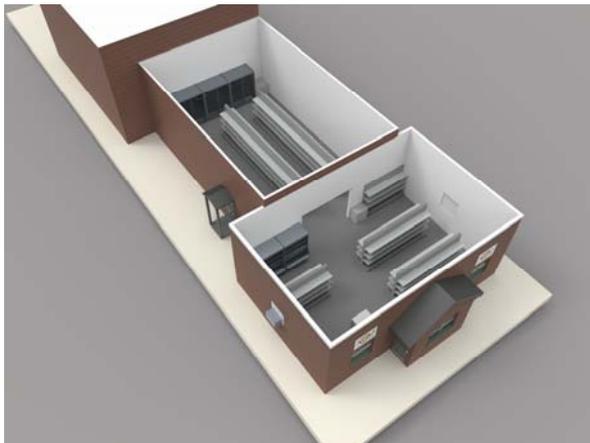


Philanthropy

Goals

- Vehicle
- Nutrition education
- Study abroad
- Culinary education





A model for sustainability

- Operations
- Philanthropy
- Space

A special **thank you** to

- Lynn Pelco
- Charles Klink
- School of Business
- Terrence Walker
- Mitzi Lee
- The students and volunteers at RamPantry



“It was hard for me to focus on school work
because I was constantly worrying about
where my next meal would come from.
The pantry changed that.”

– VCU student