

## Eating Healthy at DVC: Food Pantry Brings in Fresh Produce for Free

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*Students taking a look at what the Food Pantry has to offer*

Last month, Stanley Tikando, a business administration major and the public relations director for the Associated Students of Diablo Valley College, stood behind a market stall outside the Student Union building, offering mountains of fresh bananas, avocados, red onions, and other fresh produce for free.

The DVC Food Pantry has been giving away mostly processed foods to students in need since Spring 2018. This semester, ASDVC wanted to take it to the next level, launching a monthly Free Produce Market that provides fresh fruits and vegetables to ensure that every DVC student has access to a healthier diet.

Student's response far exceeded the organizer's expectations.

"Today was unbelievable," said Tikando. "We did not expect a lot of people to swing by. I think about one hundred-ish people showed up. A lot of people said this is amazing, that they're grateful and the food pantry is really helpful."

[According to](#) *The Daily Californian*, published at UC Berkeley, 35 percent of students in California reported low or very low food security in August 2019. In the East Bay, 27 percent of students reported food insecurity. Tikando and his colleagues from ASDVC wanted to increase students' daily intake of healthy food because

studies have shown that a diet consisting of fresh produce is crucial for students' academic success.

Unfortunately, not all DVC students have the privilege to afford fresh, healthy food on a regular basis.

Dietra Slack, a Food Pantry Program assistant who supervised February's free produce market, took me on a tour to the pantry's warehouse, located on the ground floor of the Student Union building. It boasts shelves upon shelves of processed, pre-packaged produce: from canned goods like apricots, beans, corn, pasta sauce, soups and tuna, to bags of grains and pasta like macaroni, rice and oatmeal.

The food pantry also provides peanut butter, instant ramen, and snacks like applesauce and beef jerky. DVC obtains all the products from the Contra Costa/Solano County Food Bank.

Over the last year and a half, the DVC Food Pantry has received nearly 5,000 visits. It is open Monday through Thursday from 10:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. People can come to the pantry twice a week and bring home five items per visit.

In the past two months alone, approximately 400 visits have taken place. According to Slack, the food pantry not only helped DVC students as individuals, but also their families at home. "If you think about it that way, we have helped many more people than we have on our records," said Slack.

Slack added that the program's marketing was well executed, though DVC can do even more given the fact that many students remain unaware of the program.

"DVC did a great job promoting the Free Produce Market on Instagram and [the school's] website," she said.

To sign up for the food pantry program, students have to fill out a confidential [online intake application form](#), which can be accessed from [www.dvc.edu/foodpantry](http://www.dvc.edu/foodpantry), or by filling out the hard copy available at the Food Pantry. To visit the Food Pantry you must be a DVC student. No background check or academic requirement is needed in order to qualify.

The next Free Produce Markets will be held March 18 and April 22 this semester.

## **About the Contributors**

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