

Interview with Tiffany Holtzman for Website.

At this year's concert, we are sponsoring a food drive to benefit the Howard Community College (HCC) food pantry, known as "Fueling Dragons." Tiffany Holtzman, Fueling Dragons Coordinator, talks about combating food insecurity for HCC students, offers insight into Fueling Dragons services, and reveals challenges faced by the program, especially amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, Tiffany discusses the food pantry's most needed items and how to support this critical program that improves the lives of HCC students.

How long have you been involved with Fueling Dragons?

This is my first semester at Howard Community College (HCC) as the Fueling Dragons Coordinator. I started two weeks before the beginning of the fall term and it has been an incredible journey as we reestablished the Fueling Dragons program after the campus had been closed for 18 months due to the pandemic.

Is there general public awareness that a percentage of students attending HCC, located in one of the most affluent counties in the nation, experience food insecurity?

It is shocking to people that we can live in one of the wealthiest counties in the nation and yet food insecurity exists here and in every community. Howard County is no different. Food insecurity is not about having food, but having the right food to fuel your body. According to HCC's Office of Planning, Research, and Organizational Development (PROD), 43.6% of fall 2020 credit students have received financial aid during their time at HCC. We see a lot of students in the pantry who are grateful for access to healthier foods due to food insecurity. So, there really is truth in the old stereotype of a starving college student.

What services does Fueling Dragons provide? Are they limited to "feeding a man a fish" or do they "teach a man to fish" as well?

Fueling Dragons is a comprehensive approach to address food insecurity by providing access to healthier food for our students at HCC. As a program of the Wellness Center, Fueling Dragons focuses on a 3 step approach of providing education, access, and support. We educate our students to make healthier choices through the Supporting Wellness at Pantries (SWAP,) a stoplight system to rank food nutritionally according to saturated fat, sodium, and sugar content. We look forward to offering education: nutritional workshops, cooking demos, classes, online videos and garden workshops as we move into the spring semester. We provide access to healthy food through a partnership with Roving Radish to provide meal kits as well as offer weekly recipe meal kits supported by online videos. We have recently reestablished our campus garden which is now providing some fresh produce to the pantry. We support our students by connecting them with resources such as on campus support services and other community resources.

What is the biggest challenge faced by Fueling Dragons?

In the beginning of the semester, our biggest challenge was marketing the pantry to students. This has been a successful endeavor as we continue to see more students each week. This means that our biggest challenge now is ensuring that the resources are there to continue providing that support to our students. We continue to need healthier food options and personal care products in the pantry.

Has the need for the food pantry changed since it first opened in 2016, especially with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Prior to the pandemic, the HCC Food Pantry was seeing 200 students per month. This number will easily be surpassed by the end of November. The pantry has also transformed from providing food to students to being part of the Fueling Dragons program under the Wellness Center at HCC.

What's at the top of your "Fueling Dragons" wish list?

This semester we were able to offer Instant Pots to 20 students along with a recipe meal kit thanks to a generous donor. Although this was a very successful program, we had a lot of students on the waitlist who were hoping to also receive an Instant Pot. We would love to have sponsors for our weekly meal kits and monetary donations to help with purchasing kitchen tools like more Instant Pots.

You provided a list of the HCC Food Pantry's most needed items. Do you want those donating at the Christmas concert to bring ONLY the items listed or is there a more complete list available?

The list of most needed items can vary from time to time based on donations received and student needs. Although we focus on most needed items and healthier options, any donations are truly appreciated.

How can people make monetary donations?

The best way to make a monetary donation is online through the HCC website. [Fueling Dragons | Howard Community College \(howardcc.edu\) www.howardcc.edu/donors](https://www.howardcc.edu/donors) -

Monetary donations can also be made by:

- Sending check payable to Howard Community College Educational Foundation or HCCEF with note designating where money should go (like the Fueling Dragons program)

Howard Community College
Educational Foundation, Inc.
10901 Little Patuxent Parkway, MH 102
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Anything not covered in the questions above you'd like to add?

Thank you so much for your support! If you would like to tour our pantry, conduct your own food drive like St. Louis, or learn more about the Fueling Dragons program, please reach out to me at pantry@howardcc.edu or call 443-518-4197.

From the songs listed in our program, do you have a personal favorite?

It is so hard to choose just one! I have always enjoyed "Sleigh Ride" as an orchestra piece but singing "O Come, All Ye Faithful" is also a seasonal favorite.